



The Many Faces of the **National Programme on Ageing Workers**

The Concluding Report on the Programme

■ MINISTRY OF SOCIAL AFFAIRS AND HEALTH



The Many Faces of the

National Programme on Ageing Workers

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Abstract

The Many Faces of the National Programme on Ageing Workers The Concluding Report on the Programme. Helsinki. 2002. 163 pp. (Publications of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, ISSN 1236-2050, 2002:14) ISBN 952-00-1150-1.

This concluding report includes a comprehensive whole of measures and results from the National Programme on Ageing Workers conducted in 1998 - 2002. The programme gave rise to a lively discussion on the status, opportunities and strengths of the ageing labour force. Several research and training programmes were also started.

Many of the goals of the programme will be reached only during a longer

period of time. However, the follow-up data shows that changes have taken place. The age for retiring on a pension has been increasing during the programme, and the employment rate among older persons has increased more than the average and thus come close to the employment rate of the other age groups. Long-term unemployment among older persons has also reduced.

An external evaluation of the programme has been conducted.

Key words: ageing, ageing workers, early retirement pensions, employment, unemployment, working capacity, working conditions

Foreword

The mid-1990s saw the emergence of concern over rising pension costs and the availability and adequacy of labour supply as the baby-boom generation began to approach retirement age. There appeared at that time to be an ominous increase in the uptake of early retirement. The aim of the National Programme on Ageing Workers has been to encourage older workers to remain in work and help them to cope therein, and also to improve their chances of finding work in the first place.

The programme derives from a Government Resolution of February 1997 and has been implemented using legislative and educational approaches, a media campaign and research and development resources. The focus has varied at different times during the programme period. The initial phase concentrated on legislative amendments and a media campaign to inform the public about the programme. The middle phase (1999—2000) focused on research and development projects, while the final phase has concentrated on management training and development of workplace communities.

The Programme on Ageing Workers was implemented jointly by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Labour. It was allocated euro 4.2 million of Budget funding for the five year programme period. The programme represents the start of a process that will be

continued in the separate programmes of the different ministries and through the cooperation networks and practices established during the programme period. Preparations have been made for a follow-up programme to increase the attractiveness of working life.

As well as the aforementioned ministries, the advisory board for the programme has included representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Trade and Industry, the social partners, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Social Insurance Institution, the Federation of Employment Pension Institutions, the Federation of Finnish Enterprises and the Central Union of Agricultural Producers and Forest Owners.

This concluding report has been compiled from the interim reports and updated versions thereof drawn up during the course of the programme and research reports and analyses funded through the programme. The various contributions to the report have been brought together by the programme working group in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

Helsinki, February 2002

Permanent Secretary Markku Lehto

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Summary

The objective of the National Programme on Ageing Workers was to strengthen the status of ageing persons in the labour market as well as to improve their possibilities of staying at work and help them get employment. The programme is based on the proposals of the committee surveying the prerequisites for ageing (45-55 years) and older (55-65) persons to be employed and work (committee report 1996:14). The Finnish Government made a decision-in-principle to start the Programme on Ageing Workers in February 1997.

The programme consisted of comprehensive information and training projects carried out simultaneously in different administrative sectors. It also aimed at promoting activities to maintain the working capacity of the labour force, boosting employment and producing knowledge to create positive attitudes towards ageing and older persons. Under the terms of the programme, resources were directed to the services provided for ageing and older people by the labour administration, occupational safety and health authorities and authorities of education. The programme also included extensive research and development projects carried out in work units. Comprehensive developments in legislation were also achieved under the

”umbrella” of the programme.

The National Programme on Ageing Workers was conducted in 1998 - 2002. It was funded from the state budget and a total of euro 4.2 million was reserved for that five-year period. The main responsibility for the programme was borne by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health; other responsible parties were the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. One of the programme’s main targets was to influence general attitudes. Using various means of communication, discussion on the status, opportunities and strengths of the ageing labour force was stimulated both in the media and workplaces, and among the general public. The experience of older people as a ”national asset” was emphasised in information. It actually seems that the attitude towards older people in working life has become more positive.

Training had an important role in the Programme on Ageing Workers. Following the principles of life-long learning, resources were directed especially to improving the knowledge and skills of adults with an incomplete basic education and inadequate facilities for learning. To raise the level of vocational skills, conversion education, tailored training programmes, professional exams, appren-

ticeship systems and working-life-oriented continuing studies for the vocational post-secondary level were developed. The programme offered older people better opportunities to learn and educate themselves when more education was provided for them.

Training was also provided for the authorities in charge of services, such as occupational health care staff, occupational safety and health personnel, the personnel of the labour administration, and teachers in adult education. The purpose was to take account of the age aspect in all the measures implemented and to root the objectives of the programme in daily activities.

In the programme attention was also paid to developing managerial skills and management culture. The purpose was to educate managers to take account of the age aspect when planning tasks and directing operations, and to develop good practices. A network of educational specialists was created in connection with the projects. Flexible working time solutions, such as part-time pension and leave of absence, have contributed to the development of work units and well-being at work.

In the research projects launched within the Programme on Ageing Workers, great attention was paid to maintaining the working capacity of the labour force, developing working life as well as to health and safety at work, age-based management, age discrimination, and to teaching older people and supporting their abilities to

learn. On the basis of research results, enterprises have been provided with tailored development plans which are utilised to produce good practices and models for general use. The cooperation between research and service systems was developed in connection with an extensive survey on the needs for services among long-term unemployed older people.

A new Occupational Health Care Act came into force at the beginning of 2002. The reason for revising the act was, besides the changes in working life, especially to meet the needs of older employees while the baby-boom generation is approaching the age of retirement. In the programme attention was also paid to ensuring a sufficient number of occupational health care personnel and the quality of their professional skills.

The action for maintaining the working capacity of the work force is one of the priorities in the activities of the occupational safety and health administration, and thus the objectives of the Programme on Ageing Workers have been taken into account in all supervision activities. In this work the administration's cooperation partners are the Employment and Economic Development Centres, occupational health care personnel and the departments of social affairs and health in the provincial governments.

Towards the end of the 1990's rehabilitation has been increasingly directed to over 45 year-old persons in working life. The volume of occupational rehabilitation

arranged by employment pension institutions has been growing during the 1990's. To maintain and improve the working capacity of those at work, rehabilitation methods have been developed by the National Social Insurance Institution. In the light of experiences, rehabilitation carried out in different forms and by different methods is important for maintaining, improving and restoring the person's working capacity.

The Programme on Ageing Workers also included monitoring the volume, content and results of the action for maintaining working capacity. A barometer was developed for this purpose. It revealed (evaluations in 1998 and 2001) that the conditions for older employees to continue working seemed to have improved a little. The action for maintaining working capacity has been established in practice and slightly extended.

The labour market status of ageing persons has also been addressed by legislative measures. The purpose has been to defer retirement on the one hand by - restricting benefits, and on the other hand by changing their content to encourage people to continue working. The pension legislation was comprehensively reformed at the beginning of 2000, and further legislative measures are being planned. The labour market organisations have had an important role in this work.

The service system of the labour administration was readjusted by research,

development and experimental activities to meet the needs of ageing job-seekers. The aim was to consider the age issue in all activities of labour administration.

Due to the nature of the Programme on Ageing Workers many of its goals will be reached only during a longer period of time. The follow-up data shows that changes have taken place in line with the programme objectives. The age for retiring on a pension has been increasing during the programme. The effective retirement age of retirement, including retirement by way of unemployment pension, has also risen. During the programme period the rate of employment has generally risen but among older persons (age groups of 55-59 and 60-64) it has increased more than the average and thus come close to the employment rate of the other age groups. Long-term unemployment among older persons has also reduced in recent years.

The Programme on Ageing Workers was conducted in the different sectors of administration by means of management by objectives and special projects included in wider development programmes. The programme had a follow-up and evaluation system. The internal audit took place by means of annual reports and the Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) barometer.

The international peer review was carried out within the Peer Review Programme supporting the European employment strategy in 1999. The external evaluation was conducted by the evaluation group of Sosiaalikehitys Oy in January 2002.

Introduction

National Programme on Ageing Workers is based on the proposals of the IKOMI committee on improving employment conditions for ageing and older workers, which delivered its report in autumn 1996.

This proposed a 40-point programme, whose measures were to be implemented and effects monitored over the subsequent 5 years. The measures were grouped under three main headings: 1) development of working life, 2) promoting a return to work and 3) pension and other social protection solutions to encourage employment.

The aim of the programme has been to support the labour market position of the over-45s, concentrating both on those in work and on the unemployed. It has served as an umbrella for research and development activities, training, information provision and the shaping of public attitudes on ageing and older workers. The problems of older workers can often be traced back to the early stages of their employment career. It is therefore important to target preventive measures at younger age groups.

The National Programme on Ageing

Workers has sought to help the over-45s

- stay in work
- be better equipped to find work, and
- have better opportunities to find work when unemployed.

Programme objectives have contained elements on several levels: the individual (work ability), the workplace (development of the workplace community and the working environment), working life and the labour market (employment requirements, participation and productivity) and the macrolevel (general economic factors influencing employment and unemployment). In addition, the various levels have also been approached through system factors (pension, occupational health and occupational safety legislation and unemployment security and labour market legislation).

The programme has comprised numerous different elements, actors on different levels and components taking effect over different time frames. A useful frame of reference for grasping the programme as a whole and assessing its various impacts is provided by the balanced scorecard (BSC).¹

The programme has been implemented

¹ The balanced scorecard (BSC), a new tool for assessing strategic management, was introduced in 1996 by the Americans Robert Kaplan and David Norton in their book *Translating Strategy into Action: the Balanced Scorecard*.

in cooperation between several different actors. Activities have been coloured by the general goals of the different administrative branches involved and the means available to them in pursuit of said goals. The key actors have been the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Education, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Federation of Employment Pension Institutions, the Centre for Occupational Safety and the social partners. The aim was to achieve an extensive network of actors capable of taking account of the programme on all levels of activity. The final implementation of decisions takes place at workplace level.

The key measures in the administrative branch of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health have focused on maintaining

the work ability and health of the individual employee and providing incentives to stay on in working life. Concrete steps have related to occupational health and occupational safety and other measures relating to the maintenance of work ability, plus research and development, training and information activities designed to making these more effective. There has also been a broad programme of legislative reform.

The Ministry of Labour has concentrated its efforts on increasing the employment rate among ageing and older workers and ensuring that age-related issues are taken account of in all action by the labour administration and, at workplace level, in developing workplace communities and job contents. Ministry of Education action has focused primarily on the implementation of lifelong learning.

The National Programme on Ageing Workers is **part of the restructuring of the labour market**

As the National Programme on Ageing Workers contains a very wide range of different types of element, it is possible to assess it from a number of different perspectives. Taken as a whole, it can perhaps be most appropriately seen as part of the restructuring of the labour market that took place in the 1990s.

The Finnish economy went through dramatic changes in the 1990s. Despite seven years of continuous economic growth, there are still around 150,000 jobs less than there were going into the recession.

But the change in labour demand has been not only quantitative; there has also been a change in type. Between the 1980s and the turn of the millennium there was a dramatic increase in the proportion of knowledge workers and jobs involving the use of information technology. In just 12 years, the number of employees in traditional jobs as a proportion of all wage earners has fallen from 72 to 31 per cent.

This does not mean any reduction in the importance of industry, as the industrial sector still provides work for 460,000 people, or a fifth of Finland's total labour force.

The importance of the industrial sector is further enhanced by consideration of its

	1988	1994	2000
	%	%	%
Knowledge workers	12	25	39
Users of information technology	15	22	30
Traditional workers	72	53	31
Total	100	100	100

Figure 1. Knowledge workers, users of information technology and traditional workers as a proportion of all wage earners in 1988–2000 (%)

indirect employment impact. Indeed, the key change in recent technological development and the expansion in knowledge work has been the change in operating strategies and ways of thinking, a change which has trickled down to all sectors of output and even into the home.

A paradigm shift in business philosophy

The restructuring of the economy involves a number of factors whose influence is felt not only at the level of macrostructures and national economies, but also at the level of individual companies and the microlevel of the everyday life and work of individual people. The effects vary greatly depending on the angle and level of examination.

Good figures at the levels of macro-economics and business economics can mask a number of very painful changes and adjustments at the microlevel.

Some people who lost their job during the recession have been unable to find new employment. Growing businesses have met their need for new labour by recruiting graduates and attracting people already in work elsewhere. For the unemployed, finding a new job has often required retraining, moving to another area, or both.

The structural change in the economy caused an explosion in both productivity itself and productivity requirements. The change was so dramatic, that we can justifiably talk in terms of paradigm shift in business philosophy. In the 1980s, nobody would have seriously considered reorganization and laying off workers in a profitable company. Nowadays even successful, profitable companies are constantly reorganizing their operations.

People are moved from job to job within a group or company, functions are outsourced and staff are permanently or temporarily laid off. Great care is taken to ensure profitability, while indebtedness is clearly to be avoided. This operating philosophy would seem to have spread to every branch of the economy.

This is no mere coincidence, but part of a broader change brought about by globalization. The principles of the

market economy have scarcely ever operated as widely as they do today. One illustration of this is the growth in the GDP share of capital income and a corresponding reduction in the share of earned income.

An exceptionally difficult situation

The change in production structure has immediate implications for the structure of the labour market. Major structural changes are never easy. They bring opportunities, but also challenges and threats. For a number of reasons, the situation facing Finnish society was exceptionally difficult. For ageing and older workers, the prospect was primarily one of threats and their realization. The production structure has now changed and will continue to do so, and the labour market will adjust and be adapted with a certain degree of time lag to the ongoing changes. But the situation in the 1990s contained a number of special features.

The need to handle the recession imposed very tight boundaries on structural policy. The available means were by necessity weighted more towards the stick than the carrot. The national economy, central government finances and labour market had to be adapted to the changes according to a very tight timetable and in the order of central

government first, then the economy and finally the labour market. Central government finances were balanced almost immediately by borrowing and cutting expenditure, while the economy was brought back onto a growth trend in the space of three years. The restructuring of the labour market continued throughout the decade and is still ongoing.

The demographic and educational structure of the population presented a major problem. The baby-boom generation was growing old. Combined with the low level of education in these age cohorts, this gave rise to an awkward equation. How could ageing workers, with deteriorating health and education below the level required by the present-day labour market, be kept in their present jobs or found new work in the event of unemployment?

Another problem was the inflexibility of the labour market, an issue that became a constant topic of debate not only in Finland, but throughout the EU. As a term, inflexibility has clearly negative associations and in essence signifies an inability to adapt to a new situation. But inflexibility can also be a positive quality in slowing down overly rapid change.

Besides labour legislation (working hours, occupational safety, unemployment security and pension legislation), collective bargaining agreements and the otherwise strong position of the labour market

organizations in Finland, the tripartite principle, the inflexibility of the Finnish labour market is also due in part to what are essentially labour market traditions that have developed over a long period of time.

Debate has often been rather one-sided, concentrating on issues such as working hours, labour force mobility, pay and conditions of notice. Inflexibilities relating to management and the organization of work have attracted much less attention. Productivity can be boosted by speeding up the pace of work, but also by developing the content of work and organizing it in a more rational manner.

There were also other problems due to the inflexibility of the social protection system in the changing circumstances. Social protection legislation is a complex structure in which services and benefits are simultaneously linked to different pieces of legislation. If part of the structure is changed, this has an immediate knock-on effect on other parts, and the final result is not that originally intended. One example of this are the income and incentive traps that have served to further complicate labour market restructuring. There has also been a lot of debate over the system of early retirement pension and the problem of the 'fast track' to a pension relating to the interaction between pension legislation and unemployment security legislation. In

both cases the problem is not with the basic idea, but rather that they have become too popular. The systems were developed under completely different circumstances. We can safely assume they would never have been put in place if we had known what was going to happen in the 1990s.

Also worth a mention are problems relating to ingrained attitudes. The first half of the 1990s was marked by a tightening of belts, a speed-up in the pace of work and an increased sense of insecurity in the midst of growing unemployment. In the 1980s, people had become used to a steady growth in income levels, the principle of seniority guaranteed a permanent job and rising fringe benefits, unemployment was low and social security benefits levels were rising. There was a lot of talk of quality of life, an argument that was also used in establishing the system of early retirement pension. We cannot be sure of the extent to which this encouraged people to seek early retirement, but it certainly gave some sort of signal.

Overall, perhaps, the main inheritance from the 1980s in terms of attitudes was an emphasis on leisure time, and this was an issue that also had to be confronted in the 1990s. The traditionally strong work ethic of Finnish society had scarcely collapsed, but it had been questioned to some extent.

This was given extra force by a variety of alternative movements with values critical of the market economy, consumption and wage labour. However, a larger problem was the development of a sort of cult of youth on the part of employers. In essence, there were very logical reasons for this. Younger workers were better educated and in a class of their own in respect of their ability to adapt to information technology as compared with older workers with only the old primary level of education predating the introduction of the comprehensive schools.

It is also important to look at aspects of regional policy. Migration has always been an important tool for adjusting the labour market to changes in labour demand. This means a need to concentrate on housing policy and development of the service infrastructure. With overall demand for labour considerably weaker than the available supply, possible housing and service development needs that were very specialized or that focused on specific professions and age groups were obscured by more acute problems.

Vital importance of education policy

Labour market restructuring normally means changes in skills structures. A changing structure of production requires

a different occupational structure, different skills, entirely new professions and new ways of working. The education system endeavours to anticipate forthcoming changes by adapting the curriculum and guiding students in the direction of expanding production sectors. In line with the principle of lifelong learning, this updating of the education system also extends to vocational and general adult education.

Educational reform has indeed played a vital role in furthering the restructuring of the economy. During the 1960s and 1970s, the Finnish school system, vocational education and higher education were all thoroughly overhauled. The changes affected both educational content and the system of delivery. The system was expanded in size and a comprehensive national network of universities and other institutions of higher education was put in place.

The rolling process of structural change in the 1990s that was set in motion largely by developments in information technology presented new challenges for education policy and the promotion of occupational mobility. The response to this was the establishment of the polytechnics and the launching of a programme for vocational learning centres. This meant both a qualitative and a quantitative increase in vocational

education. The focus was especially on the growing production sectors. It is already apparent that the structural change in the economy and the labour market that took place during the 1990s would not have been possible in the absence of these reforms (Jolkkonen & Kilpeläinen & Koisinen, *Työpoliittinen Aikakauskirja* ('Labour policy journal') 3/ 2001, pp. 86—87).

Education policy was thus used to help young members of the workforce adapt to the restructuring of the labour market, while the Programme on Ageing Workers was used to help ageing and older workers. In lifecycle perspective the labour force could be described as a river. A young person enters the labour force while still studying and leaves it to take up early or normal retirement. Metaphorically speaking, therefore, the restructuring of the labour market was handled upstream by educational reforms, and downstream by the Programme on Ageing Workers.

Operating environment of the Programme on Ageing Workers

Adjustment of the labour market to the restructuring of the economy and production is not necessarily a particularly dramatic process. Seen in retrospect, the changes of the 1980s were

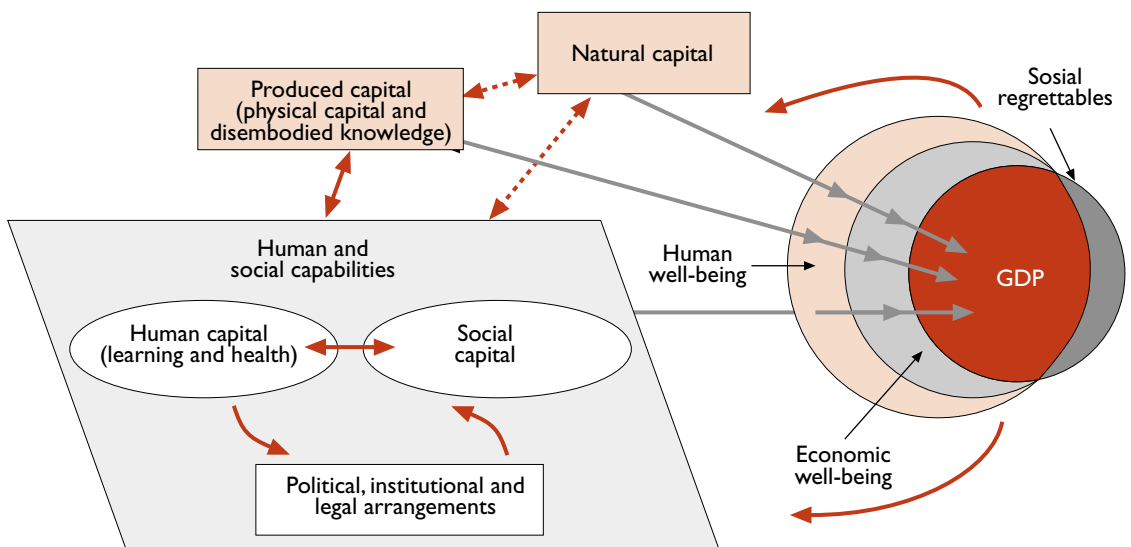


Figure 2. Key inputs to human well-being and their inter-relationships (OECD 2001, *The Well-being of Nations – the role of human and social capital*, Paris)

relatively fluid compared with the problems of the 1990s.

In seeking to solve the problems caused by the restructuring of the economy, cutting unemployment is normally one of the key objectives. The problems faced by older members of the workforce are essentially nothing new. In earlier decades it was possible to use pension arrangements to take older people out of working life, and this approach was also facilitated during the 1990s by the ‘fast track’ to a retirement pension.

The structural change was, however, so enormous that the arsenal available for dealing with it was inadequate, or rather could not be used. In fact, the old range of tools was actually reduced by raising

the minimum age for entry to the ‘fast track’. It was not feasible to allow the large numbers of unemployed or people facing the threat of unemployment to opt for early retirement.

It was not just an issue of the potential numbers opting for retirement. The funding base of the pension system had quite simply given way. Enthusiasm for encouraging older workers to take retirement was also partly subdued by the rise of productivity and profitability targets. Accordingly, an equivalent number of new employees would not have been recruited to take the place of those retiring, and unemployment would therefore not have come down to an equivalent extent.

An alternative approach would have

been to increase both labour demand and wellbeing at work by shortening working hours. However, the recession had left the Finnish economy and Finnish companies in such a weak condition that such an approach was scarcely even discussed as a theoretical option. Efforts were made to enhance wellbeing at work by developing a system of part-time pensions, but there was no more general attempt to reduce working hours. In actual fact, real working hours often became longer, for example in central government.

Labour is one of the traditional production factors quoted by economic theorists, alongside capital and natural resources. The basic classical theory has been that a growth in output requires a growth in the input of these factors.

The most recent theories have, however, reassessed the traditional production factors. Natural resources are not unlimited, machines and other equipment must nowadays be environmentally friendly, and there are no guarantees as to the availability of labour in sufficient quantities. Economic growth can no longer be explained straightforwardly as a function of traditional production factors. In pursuit of a more complete explanation, theorists have turned to new production factors such as technological development and innovations.

Other factors that have attracted attention are social development, social

protection practices supportive of economic development and a business-friendly social climate, if not as independent production factors, then at least as essential requirements for growth. Environmental factors have also forced theorists to pay attention to the problems caused by growth.

This broadening of perspective has meant that GDP per se and GDP growth are now viewed as only part of what constitutes economic wellbeing. The latter is a broader concept which, in turn, is seen as a part of overall wellbeing.

The OECD has in recent years taken a broader perspective when looking at labour as a production factor. This is not a new idea, and is actually traceable back to the 1960s. The OECD has also sought to examine economic development and social wellbeing within essentially the same framework. Thus it is no longer enough for economic development to be in balance; social development must also be in balance. It is also essential to seek overall balance, i.e. a mutually supportive interaction between economic and social development.

The basic idea of this sort of reassessment is to see the human person as something broader than a merely 'rational', mechanical actor who takes measured choices and stresses primarily material values. The human being is more than a mere *homo economicus*. Instead of

quantity, the new perspective on labour as a production factor stresses quality: competence, knowledge and skills resources and social skills. Labour is thus seen in terms of human and social capital.

Human capital consists of education, competence, knowledge and skills conceived in a broad sense plus health and functional capacity. Competence is conceived of as a lifelong process involving the ability to learn, and as a deepening of competence and awareness of one's own limitations brought by experience. It is not conceived of as narrowly knowledge-related, but as part of the individual's personality.

Social capital differs from human capital in a number of ways. Prominent in social capital are relationships and connections, and it is actually more a group phenomenon than an individual one. It is largely a question of norms, internalized values and consciousness, and it is therefore an area that requires a lot of time to develop and establish. The roots of the concept can be traced to the classic writings on sociology.

The development of human and social capital requires a political, institutional and legislative foundation. It is essentially

a question of a sort of social infrastructure, whose importance has come to light in studies to assess the economic competitiveness of different countries.

The perspective outlined above has been applied in the Programme on Ageing Workers in order to examine the ageing and older labour force from the perspective of human and social capital, even if this had not necessarily been realized when the programme was launched. The programme was originally launched on the basis of the very concrete proposals for action made by the IKOMI committee, applying these proposals in practice and conducting follow-up surveys on the results.

At the outset, it was a question of spotlighting certain age groups in the labour force and applying special measures for their benefit. On the basis of a number of studies and reports, however, the problems gradually began to take on a different shape. They longer looked the same as had originally been thought, which in turn meant it was also necessary to seek out new types of solution. We were also forced to consider how to focus the available resources in order to achieve a balanced outcome.

Balanced implementation of the National Programme on Ageing Workers

The success of the National Programme on Ageing Workers depended on the partly simultaneous, partly consecutive implementation of its various elements and seamless cooperation between the different parties involved. It is not possible to proceed sensibly without knowledge, nor is it possible to educate or train in the absence of competent

teachers. Similarly, services or benefits cannot be provided without legislation.

The everyday reality of the Programme on Ageing Workers has consisted of both highly concrete activities in the workplace and taking time to grapple with broad issues of principle. Balanced implementation has meant that the consequences of action in one area could

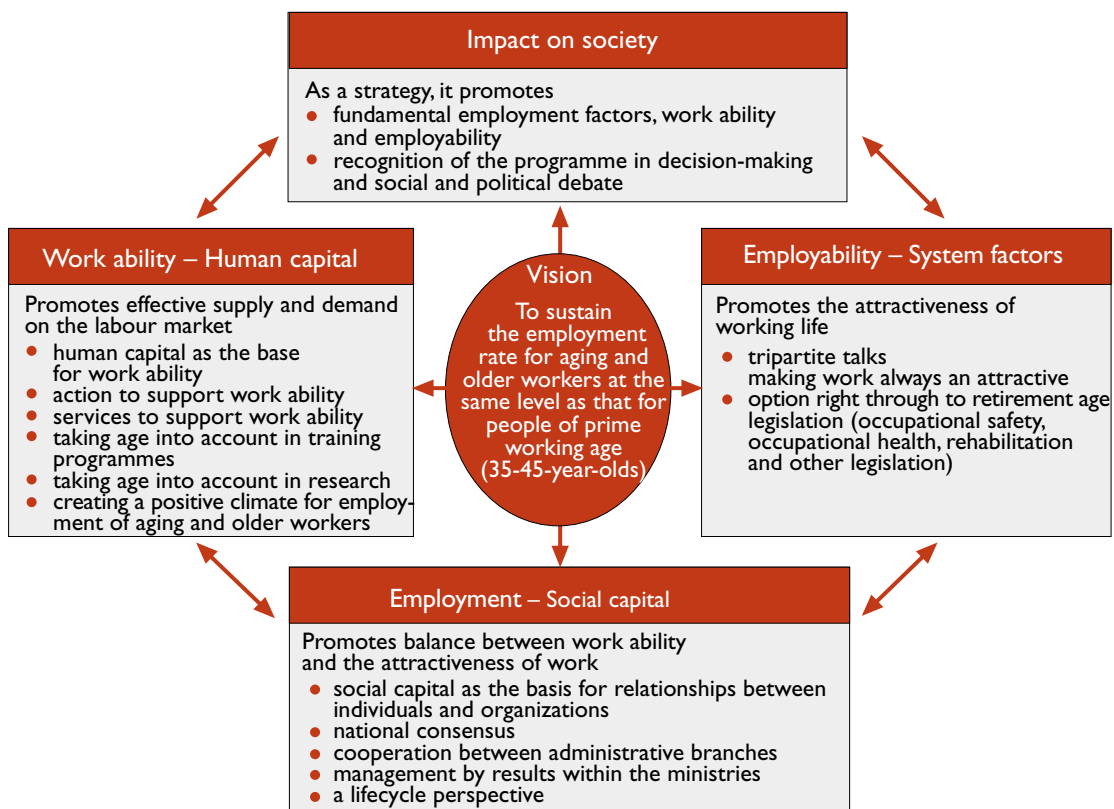


Figure 3. Effective balanced implementation of the National Programme on Ageing Workers

not be allowed to cause problems somewhere else. In practice, this has made it essential to compromise, which is perhaps the key issue in balanced development. That which would undoubtedly increase wellbeing at the level of the individual could, if applied extensively, prove economically unsustainable — if not necessarily in the short term, at least in a longer term perspective. Similarly, that which may have appeared essential from a production perspective could have turned out to be socially unsustainable. The sustainability of solutions has had to be considered from the point of view of several different cycles. On the other hand, however, there was also a need for immediate action.

The basic vision of the programme was to achieve a situation in which the employment rate for ageing and older workers was the same or almost the same as those in their prime years of working life, the 35—45 age group. The social impact or practicality of the programme,

social processes, economic and social resources and the work ability of the population constitute chronologically interwoven processes and chains.

Operating strategy

The Programme on Ageing Workers was built around the issues of work ability and ability to find work. Work ability means the development of human capital to meet the demand from the labour market. The individual's ability to find work relates to the social capital of society, which is deployed to support the development of work ability with legislation and other agreements. The programme was aimed at the ability and will of the individual to stay on in working life and also at the ability and will of companies to retain their employees in working life.

One basic problem is that while individual resources weaken with age, the demands of work remain unchanged. As personal resources decline, so does work ability. The basic solution is to reinforce

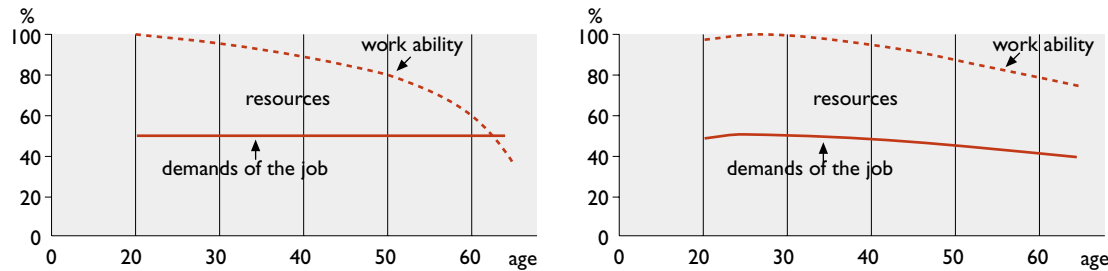


Figure 4. Operating strategy of the National Programme on Ageing Workers

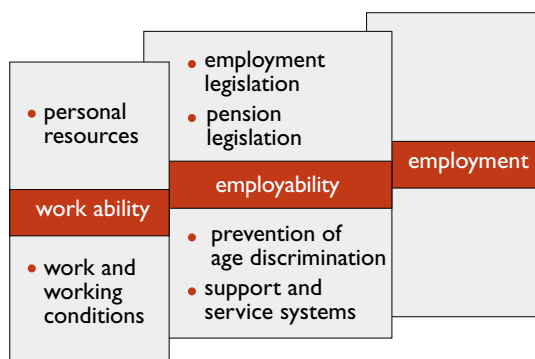


Figure 5. Work ability, employability and employment rate

the individual's resources and reduce the demands of the job. This allows the retention of adequate resources and a level of work ability that permits a full-time input at work.

Work ability creates the basis for the ability of the individual to find work. This, in turn, can be supported through a variety of support and service systems, employment and pension legislation and the values and attitudes current in society. Within the programme, work ability and the ability to find work together constitute the process that leads to employment.

Society is structurally imbalanced in a situation where the work ability of the over-55s is no longer adequate for them to find employment. Pressures to develop early routes of exit from working life arise particularly in situations where the age

structure of the population is conducive. This means a situation in which more young people with a good level of formal education are entering the labour market than the number of older people who are leaving it. The level of social capital¹ available to society determines how social protection is tailored to meet the needs of those employees who have been pushed off the labour market by technological change.

It is difficult to scrap these early routes of exit from working life in a situation where employees have become uncertain of whether a) their work ability is up to the demands of working life, and b) whether their present employment will continue through to the normal retirement age.

The function of the National Programme on Ageing Workers is to help employees' human resources rise to the challenge of technological development. This means making the reserve of human capital greater than the demand for work ability in working life. The development of human capital is an essential, if not sufficient, condition for the achievement of full employment. Incentives must be geared so as to support the performance of work. This cannot happen without the simultaneous development of social relationships, or social capital.

¹ In this context, social capital is understood to mean the shared values, concepts and institutional networks that facilitate cooperation between different groups in society. Compare OECD (2000), The Importance of Human and Social Capital for Economic Growth and Sustainable Development.

Promoting continuity of employment and wellbeing at work

Continuity of employment for ageing and older workers (staying on in working life), wellbeing at work and the ability to find work are influenced by a wide range of different factors. However, in a situation where public health is developing positively, it seems contradictory that subjective measurements speak of fatigue and burnout in working life. A number of questionnaires and surveys also point to an interest in early retirement. Indeed, the average age of transfer from working life to one or other of the pension systems is only 59, well below the official age of retirement, despite steady improvements in public health and lengthening life expectancy.

Staying on in working life, work ability and wellbeing at work are all the result of a very long process. A strong position on the labour market and a good

ability to find work require effort. A basic problem in coordinating the issues of ageing and working life is that human resources and the demands of working life develop in different ways. Changes in human resources are highly individual and can vary in direction across the different areas of an individual's functional capacity (physical, psychological, social) at different stages of life. The demands of work do not necessarily follow the natural development curve of the individual human being. The demands of work are the product of negotiation and do not always take account of physiological laws.

The employment rate among the over-55s is very low for both men and women, and the trend in recent decades has been a fall in the employment rate across all age groups. The short-term target at present is for an employment rate of 70 per cent, with a rate of over 75 per cent in the longer term. This cannot succeed if the employment rate among the over-55s

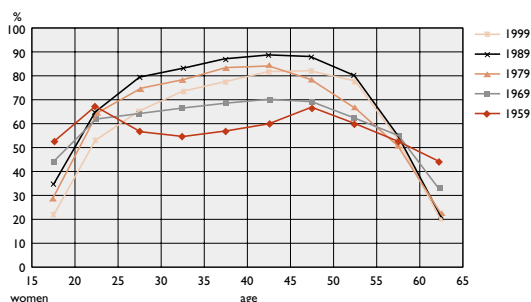
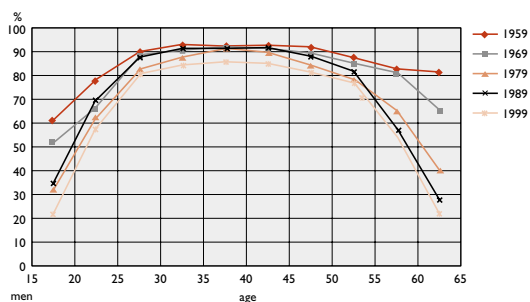


Figure 6. Employment rate in different age groups

does not come up initially to the EU target of 50 per cent, and then begin to approach the level for those of prime working age, as was the case in the 1960s and 1970s.

Work ability

In the context of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, work ability means the sum of factors relating to both the individual and work that are important for the individual's ability to perform in working life. Work ability is the product of the interaction between work and the resources of the individual. The individual's resources are realized through work, and the result is influenced by both the workplace community and the working environment, and the physical and mental demands of the job.

The basis of work ability is health in the sense of physical, psychological and social functional capacity. This 'health' is however 'filtered' through education and skills plus motivational and attitudinal factors to produce the resources available to the individual. These resources are then tested by the mental and physical demands of the job plus the demands and challenges of the working environment and the workplace community. Deficiencies in skills weaken the individual's resources, and when the individual is unable to properly meet the demands of the job, there is a danger of work ability being undermined by fatigue and burnout. Thus,



Figure 7. Work, work ability and long-term effects

besides being the interactive sum of many different factors, an individual's 'final' work ability is also the result of a process over time. Work ability is at the same time always a component of the individual's life at any given moment.

Workplace health promotion (WHP) has gradually taken on the following form: in practice, it can be geared to restore, maintain or develop work ability, depending on the specific work ability situation and needs of the focus group. The basic model for ageing workers is structured around the integration of four lines of action. Two of these focus on work, and two on the individual.

Measures focusing on work address mainly the content and physical environment of work plus the workplace community. Measures focusing on the individual are addressed mainly towards the strengthening of health and personal resources plus the development of professional expertise and skills. The mutual interaction of properly sized and targeted measures can restore the work ability of ageing workers. This results in improvements in the quality and productivity of work and the quality of life and wellbeing of the individual. Studies indicate that the long-term effects are visible in what has been referred to as the ‘third age’.

Employability

Although work ability constitutes the foundation of an individual’s employability, it is not enough in itself. The employability is influenced by a number of system factors including labour legislation, pension legislation, support and service systems and action to prevent ageism. These all influence the behaviour and choices of the individual. The concept of employability is closely related human and social capital. We shall next examine the balance between labour supply and demand in a framework formed by technological development and social protection.

The point of departure in figure 8 is a labour market balanced at a given level of

wages (W_A) and a high rate of employment (N_A). Technological development then takes place and causes a demand for more and slightly different skills than the previous level of technology. If the labour market can adapt fluidly to this technological advance, a new balance is achieved at a higher level of wages (W_B) and a higher rate of employment (N_B). However, technological development favours such skills that some members of the labour force are unable — at least immediately — to adapt to the challenges of the new technology. This gives rise to structural unemployment, reflected in a leftward shift of the labour force supply curve. The new labour market balance is now achieved at a higher level of wages (W_C) and a lower rate of employment (N_C).

A society can respond in two different ways to the emergence of structural unemployment: either a) by holding social protection at the previous level, or b) by providing people with an honourable exit from working life. The latter can be achieved by improving social protection through the provision of early routes of exit from working life and/or relaxing the requirements for leaving working life. Under the first option, the society is said to have a non-accommodative social protection policy, and under the latter option, an accommodative social protection policy.

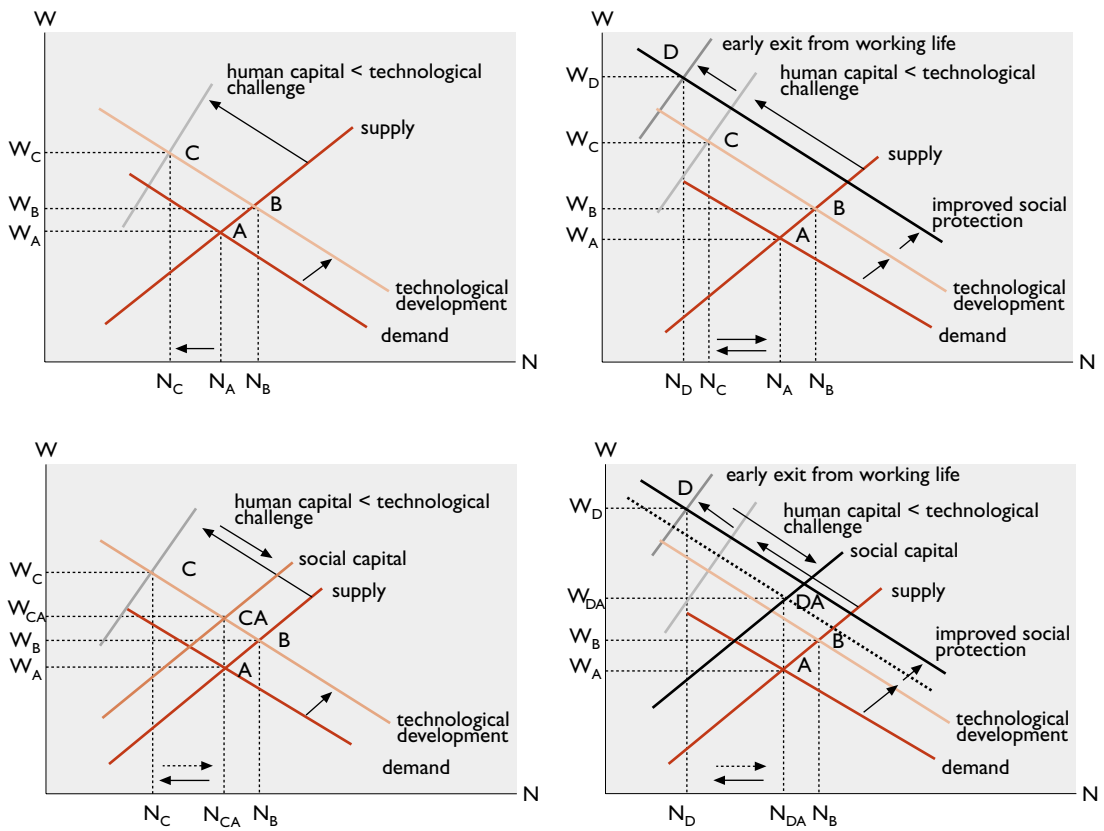


Figure 8. Theoretical adjustment model

If society does not respond to the emergence of structural unemployment, i.e. pursues a non-accommodative social protection policy, the labour market balances out at wage level W_C and employment rate N_C . Technological development has given rise to an amount of structural unemployment equal to $N_C - N_A$.

If, on the other hand, society responds to structural unemployment by improving social protection, this will cause an increase in the social protection costs on employers and a rise in labour demand.

Some employees with the ability to meet the challenges of the new technology will decide instead to opt out of working life. The supply curve will shift further to the left and structural unemployment will get worse. This interplay between technological development and social protection will produce labour market balance at an even higher level, with an even higher level of wages (W_D) and an even lower rate of employment (N_D). A level of structural unemployment ($N_D - N_A$) emerges, of which unemployment

corresponding to N_D-N_C may be considered voluntary.

Technological development has given rise to two different labour market balances (C and D). Under C, structural unemployment can be effectively dealt with by developing the resources of the labour force to match the demands of working life. But under D, this is not enough. Here, there is a need to improve the incentives for staying on at work as the human resources of the labour force begin to correspond more fully to the challenges of working life.

The situation becomes a problem when skills deficiencies become structural, as would now seem to have happened in Finland and many other EU countries. It would appear to be impossible to employ some members of the labour force, and specifically some members of the ageing and older labour force, at the present level of wages and structure of labour costs, because the productivity of their labour is not sufficiently high. The age-related wage structure largely follows the principle of seniority.

Wage levels can therefore rise with age, although productivity does not necessarily keep pace. This presents a problem, particularly in the event of unemployment. A new job may be available, but at a lower level of pay than the previous one. Wages rising with age serve as an incentive to stay on in working life as long as possible, but at the

same inhibit the recruitment of older labour as 'too expensive'.

A problem with factors relating to the workplace and the workplace community is often that, when they are positive, their incentive value is often overlooked. In contrast, problems in working conditions often serve very strongly to undermine motivation.

From the point of view of the Programme on Ageing Workers, labour legislation, pension legislation, support and service systems and the prevention of ageism should form a mutually supportive system of incentives to guide and support ageing and older workers to remain in working life until the normal age of retirement.

Such a system of incentives cannot, however, function in the same way all the time. In normal working life, the incentives that matter are pay, issues related to the work itself, such as how interesting or challenging it is, and all the factors that operate through work plus the respect achieved through work. These are primarily factors that relate to a person's professional status, the workplace and the workplace community. Many important factors are determined by collective agreements, and are thus in essence independent of the individual workplace.

Employment

When a society is in structural imbalance as indicated by labour market balance C

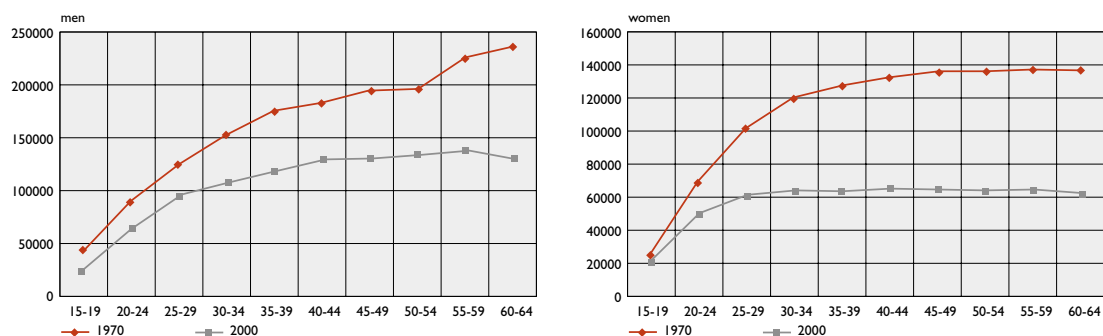


Figure 9. Total payroll/wage earners in different age groups in 1970 and 2000

or D, achieving balance requires the strengthening of social capital at the level of the individual, the employer and society as a whole. Social capital is understood here to mean the shared values, concepts and institutional networks that facilitate cooperation between different groups in society. Social capital differs in a number of ways from human and physical capital (compare OECD 2001²), because

- it relates to interaction between people rather than the individual's personal characteristics
- it is primarily a public good, because it is shared by a group
- it develops through the social investment of time and effort, but cannot be pinned down as easily as mental or physical capital.

Without the development of social capital it is not possible to return from the imbalances represented by C or D to a

high rate of employment (N_A) at a higher than original level of wages (W_A).

If a non-accommodative social protection policy has been pursued by not creating early routes of exit from working life, the reinforcing of human resources allied to a combination of personnel development and the development of health and safety at work will be enough to return to a the high level of employment represented by N_A . The level of wages will then be W_{CA} .

If an accommodative social protection policy has been pursued by providing early routes of exit from working life, the high rate of employment N_A will be reached at an even higher level of wages (W_{DA}). A condition of this is that human resources have developed even more favourably than in the previous alternative and that those individuals who have previously had sufficient work ability want to carry on in working life. The probable

² OECD (2001), *The Well-Being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital*. Paris.

alternative in such a situation would be a middling level of wages achieved by making it harder to take an early exit from working life and more profitable to the individual to stay on at work.

If a government pursues an accommodative social protection policy this promotes social cohesion more than a non-accommodative policy would do, but it will lead to an unsustainable situation of ‘freeloaders’, in which some people have the ability but not the will to work. The return to high employment will require both action to promote work ability and system changes to encourage employees to stay on at work until the normal age of retirement.

The labour market balances out at a higher level of wages. In other words if a government has pursued an adaptive social protection policy, the achievement of balance at a high rate of employment will require more input into maintaining work ability than a situation in which the government has been content merely to pursue a non-accommodative social protection policy following the emergence of structural unemployment.

The overall picture relating to ageing and work is reflected in a matrix that depicts problems, solutions and goals both at the level of the individual, the company (or organization) and society as a whole (Ilmarinen). The nine fields of the matrix can be read vertically, horizontally or diagonally. Vertically, the division into

individual, company and society emphasizes the need to spread the responsibility for keeping ageing workers involved in working life between these three different levels. The horizontal level emphasizes that the recognition of problems, choice of solutions and setting of goals must take place on all three levels. A solution can be found only if there is interaction between the levels.

Life course in chronological perspective

Factors at workplace and individual level will influence how the system incentives will actually perform in practice. These incentives are intended to influence the behaviour, or in other words the choices, of the individual. Although workplace and individual factors function independently in influencing people’s choices, they also filter the effects of system-level incentives. All the elements that influence behaviour link up to form a skein of direct and indirect influences.

In life course analysis, the individual’s career is seen as determined on the one hand by his own choices (microlevel) and on the other hand by the structure of opportunities provided by society (macrolevel incentive structure). This represents an attempt to bring these two levels together in the same analysis.

Some form of life course analysis would seem ideally suited to the purposes

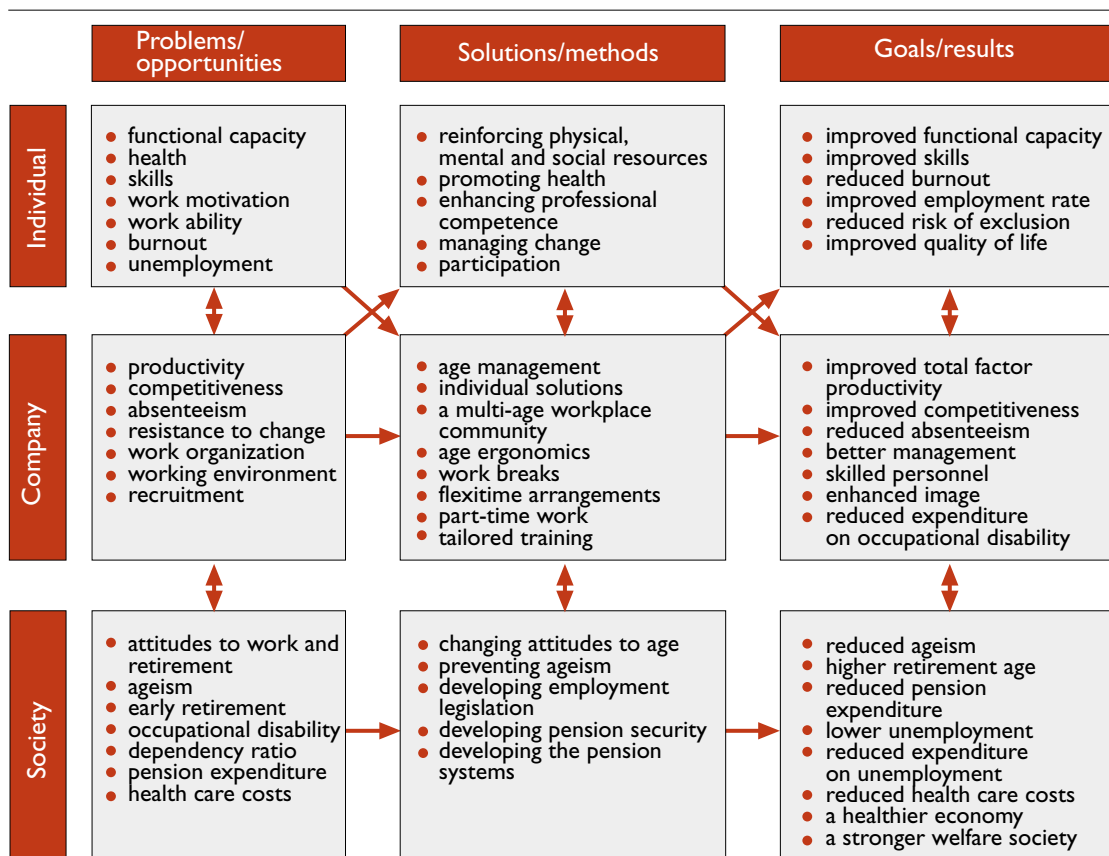


Figure 10. The links between ageing and work

of the Programme on Ageing Workers. The regulatory role of pension policy and social policy in the welfare state are linked in several ways to chronological age, in this way influencing and directing the chronological organization of people's lives.

It has even been suggested that life course itself is essentially a social institution mediated by social practices relating to the various stages of a person's life. The resulting institution determines the periodization of the stages of life of

different groups in the population into, for example, an education period, a working period and a pension period.

Population structure can be translated onto a chronological axis by using a lifespan table to calculate the expected stages of life. The idea is to reflect the systems of the welfare state and the results of economic development onto a chronological axis.

The structure of life stages derived from the lifespan table is very close to the relative structure of actual population

groups. There is a slight divergence due to the fact that the table depicts the theoretical age structure of the population, and it also does not take account of issues such as migration. Translated into life stages, population structure reveals the following facts:

- Belonging to the labour force, i.e. being on the labour market, now accounts for under half of the average individual's lifespan.
- People spend a considerable proportion of their lives, over 20 years, on retirement pension.
- Taken together, childhood and study also account for over 20 years of the average lifespan.
- Permanent mass unemployment would mean that everybody would on average be unemployed for several years of their life. In 1996, unemployment expectancy was almost six years.

Unemployment continues to influence development of the economic dependency ratio, and this means it is essential to assess chronological life course from this perspective as well. The economic dependency ratio indicates how many people are dependent for their livelihood on the output of one person in work.

The rapid drop in the employment rate and the arrival of mass unemployment weakened the economic dependency ratio during the first half of the 1990s. Despite an official retirement age of 65, the

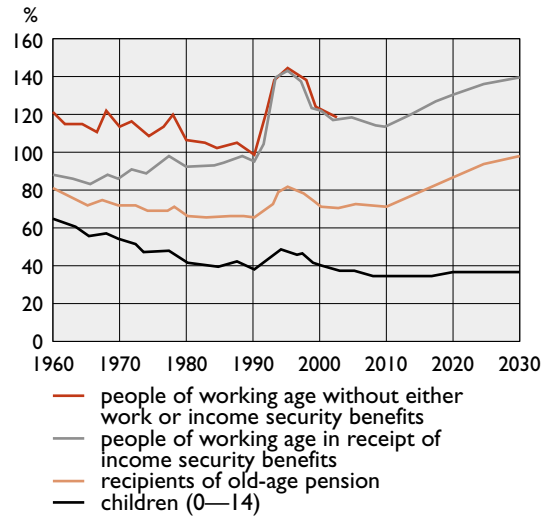


Figure 11. The economic dependency ratio and its components: the trend in 1960—2001 and a projection forward to 2030

average age of retirement in Finland in 2001 was 59. Securing employment and slowing the trend of early retirement are key means for ensuring a balanced economic dependency ratio.

In addition to the levels of the individual, the workplace and systems, we should also give some attention to the macrolevel of the economy as a whole. This clearly shows that work ability does not guarantee an individual will keep their job or an unemployed person find work. Employment and unemployment, labour supply and demand and how they come together are inextricably linked with the general development of the national economy, economic policy and the business cycle.

The labour market position of ageing workers

The number of people in work rose steadily between 1994 and 2000 on the wings of continuous economic growth. Growth ground to a halt in 2001, but this is expected to be just temporary. The employment rate rose in 2000 to almost

67 per cent. The improvement was not, however, across the board, but age-group specific. The trend among ageing workers, and especially among older workers, has not shown signs of improvement. The main change compared with the early 1990s was in the 55—59 age group, where the proportion in the fast track to retirement pension rose from

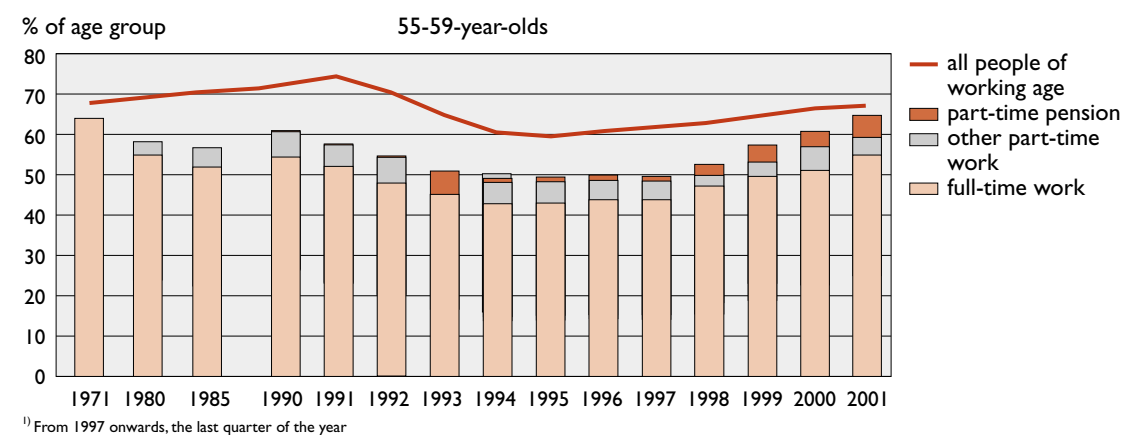


Figure 12a. Older people in work as a percentage of the age group

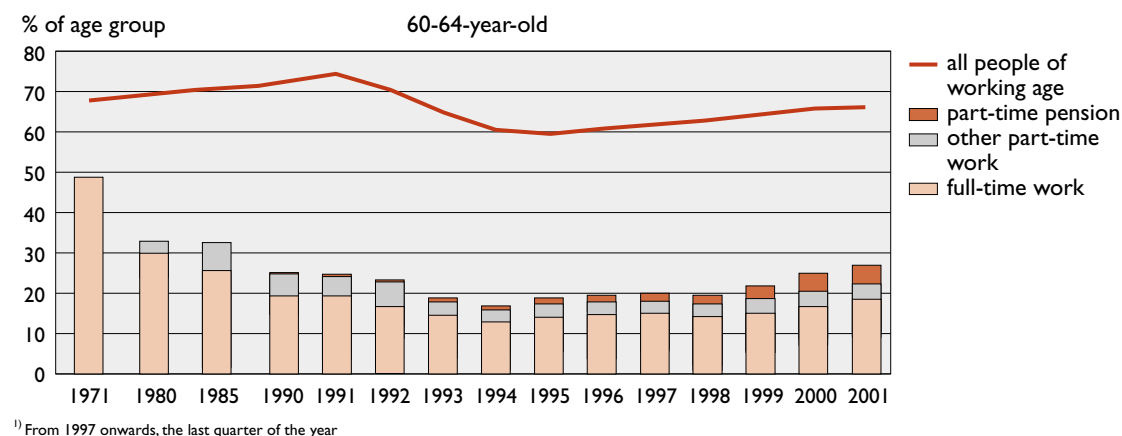


Figure 12b. Older people in work as a percentage of the age group according to working time model and compared with all people of working age 1971-2001

just one or two per cent to over 10 per cent at the end of the decade.

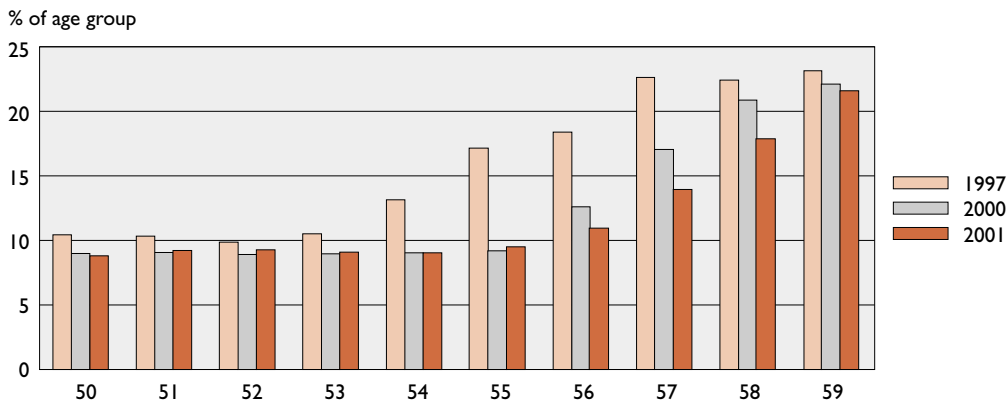
According to labour market survey statistics, employment among the over-55s improved rapidly, even surprisingly so, during 2000—2001. In 2001, there were 22,000 more over-55s in work than there had been a year earlier. The proportion of over—55s in the total labour force correspondingly rose from 28 to 31 per cent. The improvement touched both men's and women's employment. The proportion of over—55-year-old women in the total female labour force rose from 25 to 29 per cent, the corresponding rise for men being from 31 to 34 per cent.

All in all, the employment situation for older workers has improved considerably over the past three years. According to the latest statistics, 64 per cent of those in the

fast-track-to-retirement age group (55—59) now already have a job. As recently as three years ago only around half the people in this age group were in work. 60—64-year-olds are also staying on longer in working life. Their employment rate has risen from 20 to 26 per cent.

There are many factors behind this positive trend, as a result of which the chances of ageing and older workers holding on to their jobs have improved. There is always a delay in the positive employment impact of economic growth, and the same can be said of the impact of the Programme on Ageing Workers.

The employment rate among ageing workers in Finland has also developed positively in comparison with the other EU Member States. Only in the Netherlands has the employment rate of 55—64-year-olds risen more than in Fin-



¹⁾ Demographic data for December 1997-2001 (forecast)

Figure 13. Percentage of 50—59-year-olds unemployed at the end of 1997, 2000 and 2001

land. 42 per cent of Finns in this age group were in work last year, against an EU average of only 38 per cent.

The knowledge and skills of Finnish workers are increasingly matching the challenges of working life, while the improved work ability of the labour force makes it easier to meet the challenges of technological change.

But improved work ability alone is not enough to bring about high employment; the financial incentives to staying on at work must be tuned in line with the improvement in work ability. If this is not done, Finnish society could suffer from the problem of ‘freeloaders’, people who are ready to use the services society provides, but are not ready to contribute to producing them. This distorts the mutual responsibilities, duties and rights between the generations.

Public information

Influencing attitudes has been the key approach of the Programme on Ageing workers throughout the entire programme period. By providing the public with information, the programme has stimulated a debate on values in respect of the current position, strengths and opportunities in working life of ageing workers. The goal has been to improve their position on the labour market, enhance their interest in work, increase the length of time they stay on in working life, and help them to find work.

This information has been aimed at the whole population, at employers and workplace occupational safety personnel, labour market organizations, occupational safety districts, occupational health care, the employment and economic development centres, employment offices, educational institutions, organizations for the unemployed plus the media and decision-makers, for whose support the programme has gathered and analysed the latest information. A special effort has gone into directing information at ageing employees themselves and at employers, whose respect for the value of their more experienced employees the programme has sought to increase.

The main information effort has been the job of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Labour, who have drawn on the expertise of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health has taken special responsibility for the overall planning and coordination of information, the production of common material and, in the area of content, wellbeing at work, the maintenance of work ability and the improvement of working conditions. The Ministry of Labour has sought to influence employers' willingness to employ older workers and keep them on at work as long as possible by campaigning among private and public sector employers on age management and on the experience-based strengths and learning ability of ageing workers. The Ministry of Education has contributed the theme of lifelong learning. Cooperation between the ministries has worked well.

Experience is a national asset

The Programme on Ageing Workers was launched in 1997 with work on designing the graphics and getting the commitment of participants. The logo selected for the programme was a stylized letter 'i' (for the Finnish *Ikäohjelma*), which has been

displayed on all programme material throughout the course of the programme: publications, posters, postcards, envelopes, transparencies and bulletins. In addition to the economic perspective, the slogan chosen for the programme (*Koke-mus on kansallista pääomaa*, 'Experience is a national asset') was also intended to highlight the strengths of ageing workers, the importance of maintaining physical and mental health and training opportunities, use of the opportunities for preventive early rehabilitation, and the importance of management, working conditions and the organization of work in the maintenance of work ability.

A relatively large, attractively produced, easily read and understood general presentation of the programme was produced for distribution in employment offices, places providing occupational health care, libraries, fairs, exhibitions and other events. In addition to this, research results were used to produce special material for each target group, and a trainers' guide was provided for use at training events in the different sectors. 1997 also saw the launch of training for the personnel in the occupational safety districts, employment offices and employment and economic development centres.

The publication *Hyvä ikä* ('Prime Years') was launched as the organ for the programme, coming out in a total of 16 issues. The initial print run of 100,000

later became set at 80,000. Among other outlets, the publication was distributed to all cooperating partners and was also available via the employment offices. It provided extensive coverage of the programme, the challenges of ageing, and how we can respond to those challenges. Editorial responsibility was handled by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

The programme designed its own website (www.ikaohjelma.net). This gave extensive coverage on research, legislative changes and other matters relating to the theme of ageing. Once the programme is completed, coverage of ageing issues will continue on a new website on work and ageing (www.ikatyo.fi) commissioned from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health.

The well-known singers Katri Helena and Kai Hyttinen have been active patrons of the programme, performing as a duet the programme theme song *Teh-dään yhdessä* (Let's work together). The lyrics for this were by Veikko Salmi, music by Kai Hyttinen and arrangement by the conductor Esa Nieminen. The song was produced both as a compact disc and a music video. The video was designed and produced by a group of young vocational students with the support of the television channel MTV3 and the City of Espoo's apprenticeship project *Ote*. The making of the video was a practical demonstration of the basic message of the song on the unique value of cooperation

between experience and youth. The video was broadcast dozens of times on MTV3.

The mass media were used to inform the public on the programme and to stimulate interest and sustain discussion on the issues surrounding ageing and working life. Special effort has gone into the publication of research data.

Besides the standard media bulletins, contact with the media has also been maintained through meetings with journalists and editors. Public awareness of the issue of ageing has also been maintained in the media with the help of TV infomercials, announcements and advertising. The general public have also been introduced to the programme through outdoor advertising campaigns and programme stands at a variety of educational events and fairs. Throughout the programme period, the programme has also been on display at the permanent occupational safety and health exhibition in Tampere, and as part of the exhibition at fairs and other events in different parts of Finland.

The programme has also been presented on the radio. Local radio in Helsinki presented self-funded programmes lasting 15—30 minutes on themes relating to ageing. Short topical programmes have also been produced for local radio stations in different parts of the country.

A special thank you is due to the

popular music radio station *Suomen Sävelradio* for its work in keeping the issue of ageing in the public eye by broadcasting daily programmes (Mon.-Fri.) on questions relating to ageing. These broadcasts will continue until the end of 2002.

The Programme on Ageing Workers has organized two large seminars for decision-makers: a seminar to launch the programme in the Finlandia Hall and a seminar on management in the Palace Hotel. Among other approaches, the message has been carried to employers and employees by highlighting examples of good practices. For example, *Hyvä ikä* has carried articles on companies that are keen to hold on to their employees and improve their working conditions, and also of older workers who have taken advantage of training opportunities to find a job or change to another field.

Joint efforts to improve work ability

The Programme on Ageing Workers put a lot of effort into publicizing its *Työkyky Tehdään Yhdessä* project ('Work together for work ability'). The means employed were outdoor advertising, an information campaign and providing articles for the press. The campaign logo, an aged version of the 'Finnish Maiden' (an emblem of Finland), brings out the various aspects of work ability: stamina, health, interaction,

knowledge, skills, willpower, management, working conditions and wellbeing at work.

The *Työkyky Tehdään Yhdessä* project was aimed at employees, company management and decision-makers. The campaign was aimed particularly at the health care and social sector plus SMEs and agricultural entrepreneurs. Since December 1998, the 'Finnish Maiden' has been seen in press announcements, outdoor advertising and TV information slots and advertising. The campaign has also involved a special phone line with a taped message providing information on who to contact in issues relating to work ability and special pages relating to workplace health promotion on the programme website.

The project has provided the programme with a vehicle for arranging resource seminars for social welfare and health care staff in different parts of the country. Special evenings have also been arranged for rural entrepreneurs. These events have raised topical issues in the respective sectors from the point of view ageing people and offered participants tools for coping. They have been part of the effort to bring the Programme on Ageing Workers into the regions and have reached thousands of professionals.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health also provided support for the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health's

Työkyky Tehdään Yhdessä project (also known as the *Porkkana-hanke*, or 'Carrot project'), for instance by assisting in the search for companies willing to develop in this way. The project involved 20 companies who are engaged in practical development of health promotion in the workplace.

Impact

With the help of a flexible range of tools and cooperation with a variety of ministries, labour market organizations and other interested parties, the National Programme on Ageing Workers has succeeded in stimulating broad public debate on the challenges presented by ageing. According to follow-up on the information effort, the campaigning and provision of information have been a success. The message has been effectively communicated and the campaigns have been seen as important by the target audiences.

The media have become involved across a broad front in presenting age-related issues, and the debate has over the years grown in maturity. In the early days of the programme the media concentrated on the dependency ratio, pension costs and the adequacy of labour supply plus employees' work ability and motivation. More recently, the concept of work ability would seem to have taken on a new, broader meaning. Writing on the subject

contains greater mention of the importance of skills, management, working conditions and ways of organizing work as background factors affecting the work ability and motivation of older workers.

Attitudes towards older workers would seem to have improved during the course of the programme period: according to the national Working Life Barometer for 2000, there has been a reduction in ageism and the employment rate among older workers has improved more rapidly than for other age groups.

In its evaluation report, Social Development Company Ltd also rated the information effort a success. According to the study into the effectiveness of the outdoor advertising campaign, around a half of all Finns are familiar with the programme at least by name, while one in five people over 50 have more detailed knowledge of the programme. Over half of all respondents take a positive attitude to the programme and believe it to be both topical and interesting, and also likely to enhance employment and wellbeing at work. Older people have a more positive than average picture of the programme.

Preliminary results from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health's WHP barometer indicate awareness of the programme in workplaces, with direct experience of the programme in one out of every five workplaces. According to a

questionnaire sent to employers, the programme's information effort has been well received. Examples from several companies indicate that the issue of age has been properly understood within companies and older workers are increasingly understood as a resource whose strengths employers are keen to take advantage of.

The message of the National Programme on Ageing Workers has also spread beyond Finland's borders. Special interest has been shown by France, where the programme has featured on the TV news and in an article in *Le Monde*. Contact and questions have come both from other EU Member States and from further afield. The Swedish Government is launching a similar programme drawing on Finland's experience and the knowledge produced by the Finnish programme.

Training

According to the National Programme for Ageing Workers' recommendations for action, training was to be arranged for several key parties vital to the successful implementation of the programme. The designated professions were occupational health care, occupational safety and labour administration personnel and teachers responsible for training ageing workers. The programme has also looked into methods of instruction suitable for ageing students.

The largest groups for training have been ageing employees, workplace managers and personnel managers plus the staff of educational institutions and companies providing training services. A considerable proportion of the training for occupational health care personnel has been organized as part of statutory further training, the main provider of training being the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Training for occupational safety personnel has been the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's Department for Occupational Safety and Health, while the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education have been responsible for training labour administration and educational personnel.

As the Programme on Ageing Workers has progressed, an ever more important position has been occupied by training for

the staff of the training organizations, educational institutions and small training companies responsible for organizing training for ageing workers and supervising their participation, or in effect 'training the trainers'. Training has also been targeted towards management personnel in general and those working in personnel management and administration.

Such people play an important role in supporting ageing workers in the workplace, in recruitment and in making it possible for ageing workers to supplement and update their professional knowledge or skills and retrain for new responsibilities within their existing companies. This particular area of training has been handled by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in collaboration with other training organizations and the ministries responsible for programme implementation.

Training project on age management

Ihmisen ikäkaudet johtamishaasteena ('Stages of life as a management challenge'), or simply *Ikäjohtaminen* ('Age management') is a training project for supporting different types of organization in management and leadership development projects that further both the productivity of the organizations involved and ageing workers' work ability and ability to find

work.

The project was launched by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, with implementation the responsibility of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The latter has assembled a group to this end including the Finnish Institute of Public Management (HAUS), the management college FEMDI, Kunta-koulutus Oy (a training company owned by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities) and the Institute for Management and Technological Training (POHTO).

The project has sought to use educational means to

- spread knowledge on ageing workers and their hidden strengths and possibilities among decision-makers with influence over working life and working conditions, and particularly those in supervisory and leadership positions (age knowledge),
- reinforce those working life attitudes and practices that further the use of older labour, lifelong learning and cooperation between people of different ages (age attitudes),
- enhance management capacity to implement systematic personnel policy and good practices in the workplace (age strategy) and
- enhance expertise on the theme of age among the main organizations responsible for training managers and supervisory staff and lay the basis for emphasizing a

long-term age perspective in the management training of the future (age expertise).

The project has implemented these aims by organizing training events for management, supervisory staff and personnel professionals and by producing the training material used at these events. The project will continue as part of the Programme on Ageing Workers until the end of 2002.

Project implementation has been guided by the following key values: ethically sustainable and professionally produced high quality, customer orientation, good cooperation with different parties, and pursuit of results.

Training implementation

The age management training project has been implemented in two partially overlapping stages:

- Generation, collection and dissemination of information on age issues with the aim of helping decision-makers understand the enormous importance of the subject both at national level and within individual organizations.
- Development of good practices and practical tools and making these available for management use within organizations.

Information and tools have been offered through training on three levels:

- Special 'top seminars' have been organized for general managers and

personnel specialists in the participating organizations. These events have been open to all organizations participating in the project and have been funded by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health.

- The training organizations participating in the project have organized their own theme seminars on age management with support from project funds. The target groups have varied according to the training organization involved in organizing the individual seminars.

- The training organizations participating in the project have committed themselves to incorporating the theme of ageing and its constituent parts in their other training programmes, as relevant.

Marketing by the project has concentrated on the promotion of individual training events and has targeted both management in general and personnel managers in particular. Marketing by the training organizations has concentrated on their own specific target groups. The primary method of advertising has been through brochures for each event, with back-up from announcements in trade journals and customer magazines.

The marketing effort has also been supplemented by providing the media with material on the project, its aims, ways of working and achievements. The Programme on Ageing Workers' own outlets — *Hyvä Ikä* and the programme website — have also made an important

contribution. A lot of material on the programme has been distributed at the training events.

Training the network of trainers

The National Programme on Ageing Workers has established a network of trainers. Over a hundred people have registered for the network, including teachers from adult education organizations and institutions, independent organizational consultants and developers plus company managers responsible for personnel development and labour administration staff with responsibility for training issues.

Three separate one-day workshops were organized for the training network in autumn 1999, a further two in autumn 2000 and one at the beginning of 2002. The training provided in 1999 contained a wealth of information to help participants take an age perspective into account in planning their own training provision. The feasibility of using the training material already produced was also examined, and groundwork done on incorporating an age perspective into organizations' personnel training and development programmes.

The workshops in 2000 concentrated on the experiences gained in using the material and organizing training, presenting a variety of training

development projects covering the age theme and examined the issues surrounding age management. The 2002 workshop concentrated on practical implementation of age management and the good practices and tools needed for this.

Studies by the training project

The training project coordinating group conducted numerous studies in 2000 and 2001 to ensure the effectiveness of its work. At its strategy meeting in autumn 2000, the group analysed the forces supporting or opposing age management, clarified strategic concepts relating to its own operations, and confirmed the overall idea of the project.

The coordinating group's working meeting in summer 2001 set out to chart the practical tools for age management. This work continued at the working meeting in autumn 2001. Autumn 2001 also brought a wide-ranging questionnaire directed at people in key positions, in order to gauge practical needs in respect of age management. The group later reissued part of this questionnaire to participants at a forum on the future age management. Processing of the large amount of material collected in this way is still continuing. During spring 2002, work is under way on preparing a proposal for good practices and practical tools for age management.

Guidelines for research **and development activities**

One of the main focuses of the National Programme on Ageing Workers throughout the entire programme period has been the area of research and development. Dozens of projects have been launched using Budget funding for the programme and other appropriations. Of the latter, European Structural Fund appropriations have played a very important role. Ministry research appropriations from different ministries have also been channelled into development of direct benefit to the programme.

At the beginning of the programme attention was devoted to publicity and projects to shape attitudes. The whole question of age and ageing had to be brought to the attention of both decision-makers and the general public alike. This initial effort proved successful, follow-up reports showing that at least at the level of speech-making the message had certainly got through, perhaps surprisingly quickly and comprehensively.

In the first phase, attention was also devoted to the basic issues of retirement or staying on in working life: What factors influence people's behaviour? Why do people behave as they do in the Finnish system? The role of the 'fast

track' to retirement and the overall impact of legislative provisions in general on retirement decisions were also examined at this time.

Indeed, it is fair to say we now have reasonably reliable information on the basic issues relating to retirement, and ignorance is no longer the primary obstacle standing in the way of change. The problem is rather one of the difficulty of decision-making on an issue that has implications for almost all sections of the population. It is never an easy matter to cut established benefits. But, even so, this has been one of the areas in which progress has been made during the course of the programme.

Wellbeing at work is the sum of many parts. During the course of the Programme on Ageing Workers, a great deal of attention has been given to issues such as maintenance of work ability, workplace development, occupational safety, age management, ageism, and learning by older people. All these areas have been the focus of research projects, the results of which have with varying degrees of success also been applied in practice in the workplace. One of the most extensive of these projects has been the Finnish Institute of Occupational

Health's *Työkyky Tehdään Yhdessä* project, under which over twenty companies were provided with a tailored, comprehensive development plan. The project is generating good practices and models for use by different types of company.

As Finland has been a European pioneer in this sort of broad national programme embracing input from a range of contributors, a number of comparative studies have also been carried out during the course of the programme comparing the different EU Member States. The programme also took part in the EU's Peer Review, involving both national assessments and international comparisons. The Peer Review is to be updated during 2002.

Right from the outset, care has been taken to assess the programme from as many angles as possible. The programme has been monitored each year on the basis of basic indicators. These have included the average age of retirement and the employment of older people.

A WHP barometer was developed to provide a broader way to measure the situation in workplaces. The barometer was used for the first time at the beginning of the programme, a follow-up being conducted during the second half of the programme period. Used thus, the barometer has allowed extensive reporting on the changes taking place in

the workplace. For many issues, the trend would seem to have been positive, particularly in larger workplaces.

Several measurements have been employed to assess the success of the programme. There is no simple answer to the question of the contribution of the programme to the changes that have taken place over the past five years. It is, however, possible to point out a number of ongoing trends in society that the programme would appear to have reinforced.

In addition to this, an overall assessment of the programme by outside assessors will be published at the final seminar. Studies of the programme are presented elsewhere in this report.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's

contribution to the National Programme on Ageing Workers

Development of pension systems

From the point of view of the Programme on Ageing Workers, pension system development means regulation of the routes through which people can exit from working life. Older workers can exit working life through a number of different pension alternatives. Each alternative focuses on a definite group of workers defined through certain special criteria.

The Finnish pension system is based primarily on a distributory system whereby the generation still working funds the pensions of those who have retired. If the generations differ in size, the sum needed from each working generation to fund the pensions of the preceding generation will change accordingly. A distributory system is thus vulnerable to demographic risks.

The labour market position of older workers is fundamentally affected by the early retirement systems. Unemployment pension in particular has been used as a tool of personnel policy. The likelihood of becoming unemployed has followed the

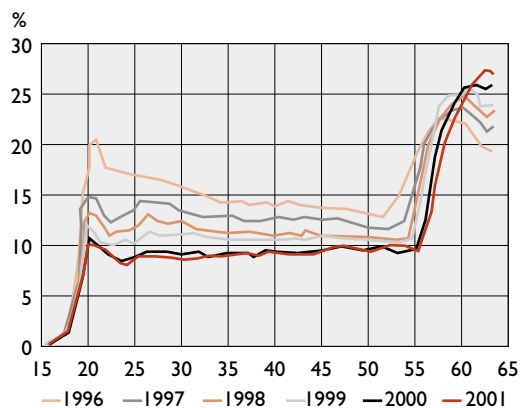


Figure 14. Age-group percentages for recipients of unemployment allowance or unemployment pension 1996–2001

changes in the age limit for unemployment pension. A fair assessment is that the unemployment pension approximately doubles the unemployment rate among older workers (in the fast track to a pension). It correspondingly reduces the likelihood of unemployed older workers returning to work (Romppanen 2000).¹

Figure 14 demonstrates the effects of legislative regulation. The fast track to a pension has provided an exit route from working life. Raising the lower limit for the fast track postponed entrance to this route. Use of this option is influenced by the employment situation and other

¹ Antti Romppanen: Ikääntymisen vaikutuksista työmarkkinoilla ('Labour market effects of ageing'). Ministry of Social Affairs and Health publications 2000:12.

factors, but legislative review of retirement conditions and benefits nevertheless holds the key if we wish to reduce the take-up of early retirement.

Financial incentives influence people's interest in taking a pension. Put simply, this means the income achievable through work is not big enough compared with the possible pension income. In other words, the prospective pension is so good that it encourages people to opt for retirement.

However, the effects of these incentives are complex and are interwoven with a lot of other personal and work-related factors. The decision to retire is therefore the sum of a number of different factors.

The flow into unemployment pension is naturally dominated by preceding unemployment, and disability pension by a reduction in work ability. Financial incentives have most influence on the probable flow into unemployment pension, and less on disability pension. They would appear to have no effect on the uptake of old-age pension (Hakola 2000).²

The ageing of the baby-boom generation, increased life expectancy and early retirement are undermining the economic dependency ratio used to illustrate the numbers outside working life

in relation to those in work. A negative trend is forecast to set in around 2010, after which the ratio is expected to remain high. A smaller working-age population will then have to bear responsibility for the income of a growing number of people outside working life.

The next few years will therefore be crucial to the long-term financing of social expenditure. Employment pension costs will rise in line with the rise in the numbers on old-age pension and the maturity of the pension system. Moreover, the continuing rise in life expectancy will also increase the length of retirement in relation to the years spent in work. Employment pension contributions are expected to rise by around 9 percentage points in relation to wages and salaries by 2030.

Changes in pension legislation

There have been several changes to pension benefits in recent years in an attempt to postpone retirement. A package of measures at the beginning of 2000 has improved the labour market position of older workers and encourages them to stay on longer in working life.

The most important changes to pension legislation were as follows:

- Unemployment pension was made

² Tuulia Hakola: Varhaiseen eläkkeelle siirtymiseen vaikuttavat tekijät ('Factors influencing early retirement'). Ministry of Social Affairs and Health publications 2000:11.

less attractive by cutting it by up to four per cent. However, in some special cases it was made easier to get unemployment pension.

- Employers' responsibility for financing the costs of unemployment and disability pensions was increased, providing an incentive to keep older employees in working life for longer. However, if an employer recruits someone over the age of 50, the employer's responsibility for unemployment and disability pension is reduced.

- The age limit for individual early retirement pension was raised from 58 to 60.

- Temporary legislation in force until the end of 2002 reduced the age limit for part-time pension from 58 to 56 with the aim of postponing early full retirement.

- There was already temporary legislation under which the pension of an unemployed pension over 55 was unaffected by the acceptance of temporary low-paid work. This was now made permanent.

- Unemployment pension is no longer included in the calculation of post-contingency accrual.

- The coefficient used in the calculation of early old-age pension was reduced.

- The use of artificial corporate arrangements to enable employers to avoid their pension responsibilities was made illegal.

- The labour administration intensified

measures (especially training and rehabilitation) for the re-employment of 55—59-year-olds in the early stages of unemployment.

- The labour market organizations and employment pension institutions agreed improvements to the rights of people in work to early examination of their rehabilitation need paid for by the employment pension system. A start was made for 58—59-year-olds, with the intention of extending the arrangement to cover all employees in 2002.

- A programme of action on wellbeing at work was launched. Workplace health promotion has been supported and working conditions improved with the help of an extensive workplace development programme.

Pension reform in the pipeline

Another major pension reform is currently under preparation. In November 2001 the social partners reached agreement in principle on the development of private sector employment pensions. The primary objective behind this agreement was to alter the employment pension system so as to delay the average age of retirement by 2—3 years and adjust the pension system to the continuous rise in average life expectancy. Most of the reforms are planned to come into force at the beginning of 2005. If the planned reforms succeed in increasing the incentives for

employers and employees to keep older workers on longer in working life, this will with time balance the financing of the employment pension system.

Under the terms of the agreement, the various forms of early retirement are to be scrapped, pension insurance contributions are to be more closely linked to benefits, and the level of benefit accrued through a long working career is to be raised. It will also be made possible to retire anytime between the ages of 62 and 68; the present upper age limit is 65. From the perspective of incentives, a noteworthy goal is for work and the income derived therefrom to always take precedence over pension income. In order to support this goal, steps will also be taken to develop working life, the right to vocational rehabilitation will be implemented in practice, and other steps will be taken to improve access to rehabilitation.

Early retirement pension options will be reduced mainly by scrapping individual early retirement pension and unemployment pension after a transition period. The working group examining the reform of unemployment security produced its report in November 2001, coinciding with the agreement on development of the employment pension. For those born after 1949, the report proposed that the security currently incorporated into the unemployment pension be transferred to unemployment

security. It also proposed raising the age limit for extended unemployment allowance from 57 to 59, while at the same time protecting the unemployment pension of those born in or before 1949. The last date for payment of unemployment pension would thus be in 2014.

The experimental reduction of the age limit for part-time pension to 56 will come to an end when the age limit returns to 58 at the beginning of 2003, and less pension will accrue from the period of part-time pension. Eligibility for early retirement pension will come later than at present.

During the transition period there will be two systems for calculating the size of the monthly pension. Pensions commencing during 2005–2010 will be based either on the pensioner's total working career or the last 10 years of each employment relationship, whichever is the greater. The final decision on the system of calculation will be taken by 2008 at the latest, to come into effect at the beginning of 2011.

The initial age for accrual of entitlement to a pension is to be lowered from 23 to 18 years, and the upper limit for accrual raised from 65 to 68 years. Employment pension will for the most part continue to accrue at the present rate of 1.5 per cent per annum, but in order to provide an incentive to stay on in

working life the accrual percentage from the age of 63 will be considerably larger, at 4.5 per cent per annum for ages 63—67 against the present rate of 2.5 per cent of earnings for ages 60—64. Another aspect of these changes is the aim to dispense with the 60 per cent limit for coordination, allowing people who stay on at work until the age of 68 to draw a pension almost equivalent to their final salary.

The working group also proposed reform of the system of pension accrual for periods without earned income. Pension would continue to accrue in a manner still to be agreed during temporary periods of absence from gainful employment. Such periods would include periods of sick leave, study and childcare.

On the basis of the agreement in principle, a start has been made on preparing legislation. The first step is to look into the numerous technical details of the solution and assess the impacts of the proposed measures, while also examining the potential effects of applying the agreement's proposed changes to private sector employment pensions to the public sector pension systems.

The reforms are expected to keep people on longer in working life and reduce pension expenditure in relation to GDP. As a result of the pension reforms

that came into effect at the beginning of 2000 and the reduction in the number of disability pensions, it has been estimated that there will be a long-term increase of around 1.4 years in the average retirement age in sectors covered by the statutory employment pension system (TEL). Implementation of the new agreement on employment pensions would raise retirement age still further by almost a year. The combined long-term impact of these measures on expected retirement age would therefore be to raise it by more than two years.

Occupational safety

Supervision by the occupational safety administration covers the whole of Finland through 11 district occupational safety and health inspectorates under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Their operations are directed by the Ministry's Department for Occupational Safety and Health in a consultative system for agreeing national targets, areas of operational focus, and special issues in individual districts.

Current areas of focus are accident prevention, promotion of mental health, and prevention of musculo-skeletal conditions. It has also been separately agreed that all supervisory activities will take account of the objectives of the National Programme on Ageing Workers.

The occupational safety and health inspectorates conduct over 30,000 workplace visits each year, and the results and observations made during these visits are entered in the occupational safety and health administration's VATI database. The economic significance of this work is enormous, as almost EUR 3 billion are lost each year through industrial accidents and occupational diseases, despite one of the lowest accident rates in Europe.

Occupational safety experts have produced a questionnaire for use in workplace visits with the aim of discovering how ageing is taken into account in the workplace and what action workplaces

expect from the occupational safety authorities. The usefulness of the questionnaire was tested in 50 companies across five occupational safety and health inspectorates. The questionnaire is available at www.turva.me.tut.fi/stm. This page can also be accessed from the occupational safety and health database (<http://fi.osha.eu.int>) and the National Programme on Ageing Workers website (www.ikaohjelma.net).

The occupational safety administration's cooperating partners in implementing the Programme on Ageing Workers have been the employment and economic development centres, providers of occupational health care and social welfare and health department of the provincial State offices. Joint research and development projects suggest the three factors that exert most influence over wellbeing at work are 1) psychosocial aspects of the job, 2) the psychological and social demands of the job and 3) factors relating to professional competence. These observations have been taken into account in the targeting and content of the work of the occupational safety and health inspectorates.

The role of inspectors and the need for training

Concern over a comprehensive, broadly based view of occupational safety, shared values, new ways of working,

internationalization, networking of advisory services, and other factors have placed demands and pressures on the professional competence of occupational safety and health administration personnel. Workplace health promotion has been defined as covering nine strategic areas of emphasis in the work of the Ministry as a whole, and particularly in the work of the occupational safety and health administration.

The aim of workplace health training was to assess the role of the occupational safety and health inspectors as supervisory officials and as experts equipped to inform and activate workplaces in the area of workplace health promotion. The definition and content of workplace health promotion was also reviewed with an eye to the needs of ageing workers. This represented an attempt to develop as broad a view as possible of the implementation of workplace health promotion and the work of the expert network responsible for implementation.

Training implementation

In addition to the Department for Occupational Safety and Health and the district occupational safety and health inspectorates, planning of training content also involved contributions from experts from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Centre for Occupational Safety and the Merikoski Rehabilitation

and Research Centre. Before implementation of training, questions on workplace health promotion were collected from all the occupational safety and health inspectorates, and the most important of these were compiled as a training workbook in the Uusimaa Occupational Safety and Health Inspectorate's working group memorandum *Työkykyä ylläpitävän toiminnan vaikutuksia työsuojelupiirin toimintaan* ('Impact of workplace health promotion on the work of the occupational safety and health inspectorate').

Before the start of training, the occupational safety and health inspectors expressed their need for coherent information on factors relating to and influencing work ability, wellbeing at work and ageing, and on ways to influence these issues. The inspectors defined workplace health promotion as a secondary issue in good occupational safety work.

The inspectors pointed out the statutory requirements on employers to remove or reduce factors that endanger the health of employees. The law nevertheless allows a great deal of leeway in how to go about this. The inspectors therefore considered it important to re-iterate the statutory obligations listed in the action programme on occupational safety.

In the workplace, the inspectors considered it essential to address those issues of primary importance to work ability and

wellbeing at work. These include how the workplace conducts its comprehensive risk assessment with the help of experts (occupational safety organization, occupational health care) and in-house personnel. This would allow the definition of areas for action. The inspectors considered the distribution of labour in the workplace as entirely a matter for the company itself.

In the opinion of the inspectors, the main focus of training should be on factors relating to work ability and wellbeing at work plus how to influence these and the role of the occupational safety inspectorates in this process.

In the end, it was decided to employ two-day training modules for personnel from the occupational safety and health inspectorates. The treatment of workplace health promotion took into consideration the key quality principles in work to maintain Finnish work ability: a broad understanding of work ability, the principle of employee participation, the needs of the workplace, focus on all employees, and cooperation. Important factors in workplace health promotion were pursuit of definite objectives, a systematic approach and monitoring of results.

Training was implemented through an interactive approach. Ageing was taken into account in the different subject areas, in whose treatment and linkage into

workplace practices consideration was also given to the role and functions of occupational health care.

The two-day training sessions were held in the North Karelia, Central Finland, Vaasa and Kymenlaakso occupational safety and health districts. The training took account of local and sectoral issues in each area. The details of the training programme were finalized in cooperation with the occupational safety and health inspectorates.

Also implemented during the training period was another training package for maintaining the work ability of the inspectors themselves.

Based on the experience gained during training, workplace health promotion is supervised

- on the basis of regulations: occupational safety legislation, regulations governing workplace health promotion, the action programme on occupational safety, the action programme on occupational health care, workplace inspections;
- on the basis of areas of emphasis in occupational safety and other performance targets — supervision of working hours, VDU work, lifting by hand, repetitive work;
- with the help of guidance and advice on occupational safety, such as providing information on good workplace health promotion practices and the agreements this is based on plus the possibilities

available through occupational health care and rehabilitation.

Occupational safety inspectors' duties and roles in the area of workplace health promotion cover both supervision of compliance with the law and the provision of expert advice. In both roles, taking account of ageing constitutes a central component in the principle of good practice in occupational safety and health.

Ageing employees — a programme on working conditions, productivity and the economy

This 'TALVA' programme has been part of the occupational safety and health administration's contribution to implementation of the National Programme on Ageing Workers. The aim has been to draw on ideas of the economics of the working environment in steps to improve the position of ageing workers and working conditions while taking account of the needs of companies and other organizations to develop their own activities in the area of occupational safety. The programme has contained four projects, briefly presented below.

The project on *the occupational safety problems of ageing workers and their economic significance* served as a general survey on the topic. It was carried out at

the University of Oulu. Research began in December 1998 and ended in May 1999. The project report was published under the name *Työolojen vaikutukset ikääntyvän henkilöstön työkykyyn ja niiden taloudellinen merkitys* ('The impact of working conditions on the work ability of an ageing personnel, and the economic significance of this impact') (Ministry of social Affairs and Health publications 1999:13).

The study examined the significance for the work ability of ageing workers of different aspects of working conditions and assessed the economic effects of these aspects.

It demonstrated that ageing raises issues that have to be taken into account in developing working conditions. Age brings a decline in an individual's physical capacities, but can at the same time mean an improvement in the ability to function psychologically and socially.

Compared to their younger colleagues, older workers have many strengths that impact positively on productivity. These include a superior ability to solve problems, the ability to take a broad view and understand how things hang together, the ability to avoid mistakes, a sense of responsibility, initiative, a strong work ethic and a sense of commitment to their work, and the ability to take others into consideration. Ageing workers are also off sick less than average and suffer

minor accidents less frequently than their younger colleagues.

In an economic sense, ageing would seem to highlight the importance of several factors. As a conclusion we can say that the ageing of a company's personnel represents an opportunity if we can just learn how to take advantage of it. There are many ways we can support the work ability of ageing employees, including changing management practices and attitudes, improving the working environment and the planning of work, and encouraging employees to take up physical exercise.

The results of this project have been presented to occupational safety and health inspectors, and the Centre for Occupational Safety has issued a publication based on the study and entitled *Seniorit työssä — Ikääntyvän henkilöstön työkyky ja sen taloudellinen merkitys* ('Older people at work — the work ability of ageing personnel and its economic significance').

The project on *sick leave among ageing workers, work ability and the efficient exploitation of skills* was intended to produce an easily understood publication on the significance of sick leave, the work ability of ageing workers and how to take care of it, and in this way to further efforts to benefit from the skills of ageing people. The project led to the

publication of *Ikääntyvien sairauspoissalot, työkyky ja osaamisen tehokas hyödyntäminen* ('Sick leave among ageing workers, work ability and the efficient exploitation of skills') (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health publications 1999:24).

Problems with work ability are often reflected in time taken off work due to sickness, and this has a considerable impact on both individual businesses and the economy as a whole. As people age, they inevitably become more prone to sickness and their physical capacities begin to weaken.

Sick leave among ageing workers is often for longer periods than that of their younger colleagues. In contrast, they have less short periods of sick leave. This is partly due to their work ethic and strong commitment to their work.

The long periods of sick leave of ageing workers do not necessarily cause a heavier financial burden on their employers than the shorter periods of their younger colleagues. Short periods of sick leave are actually often more expensive to the employer than long periods. Coping with the former often involves the need for overtime and other expensive temporary arrangements. They often also have a more immediate impact on productivity and the company's costs. In contrast, the cost effects of long periods of sick leave can often be reduced by reorganization of work, and the

employer will also recoup some of its payroll costs through compensation under the system of national health insurance.

Action is needed to allow the proper exploitation of the skills and experience of older workers. Such action would seek to improve working conditions and develop the way work is organized. It would need to support the professional competence of ageing workers and provide opportunities for further development. This can best be achieved by improving workplace management, reducing repetitive movement in the work and encouraging ageing workers to take physical exercise.

Broadly based development of working conditions covering the operations and physical working conditions of the entire organization can support business performance and the wellbeing of all members of staff. Workplaces with a good working environment often have a higher operating margin and lower absenteeism due to sickness than those with only a fair or poor working environment. Workplaces in which the personnel experience the whole organization as working effectively will be more competitive, have more committed employees and lower absenteeism due to sickness than those organizations with major problems.

The results of the study have been presented to occupational safety and health inspectors and at training events

organized by the Centre for Occupational Safety.

The project on *the importance to company productivity and service quality of the skills and experience of ageing workers* examined the impact of ageing on the operations of organizations from the perspective of productivity. The project produced a publication entitled *Ikä, työkyky ja tuottavuus* ('Age, work ability and productivity') (Ministry of Social Affairs and Health reports 2001:2).

The publication examines changes in work ability as a person ages and the impact of these changes on productivity. It contains an account of what constitutes functional capacity and work ability and examines the strengths in the working performance of ageing workers. It also presents consideration of the concept of productivity and what factors influence the productivity of work and the worker. The publication also contains examples and research results indicating how ageing workers cope at work and how their experience can be put to good use in the workplace.

The themes of the publication were presented at training days for occupational safety and health inspectors and at information events organized jointly with the Centre for Occupational Safety.

The project on *taking account of*

personnel age structure in personnel reporting explored how the ageing of the personnel and related factors have been brought out in personnel reporting and considered how reporting can be developed from the perspective of ageing workers. The conclusions from the project have been published under the title *Ikään-tymiskysymys osaksi henkilöstöraportointia* ('Incorporating the issue of ageing into personnel reporting') Ministry of Social Affairs and Health reports 2000:1).

Information on personnel and working environment is gathered to meet the needs of both the organization's management and personnel and outside stakeholders. The aim of reporting is to furnish information on changes in the size and structure of human resources, the use of working time, the effectiveness of the organization, and related costs. Outside stakeholders with an interest in workplace activities include investors, customers, subcontractors, financiers and the authorities. In the workplace itself, there is also a need for information on the available human resources and any changes therein.

The content, scope and conceptual tools of personnel reporting are, however, not yet firmly established. Information is needed on the types of reporting model available and the type of information they can provide.

The point of departure for personnel

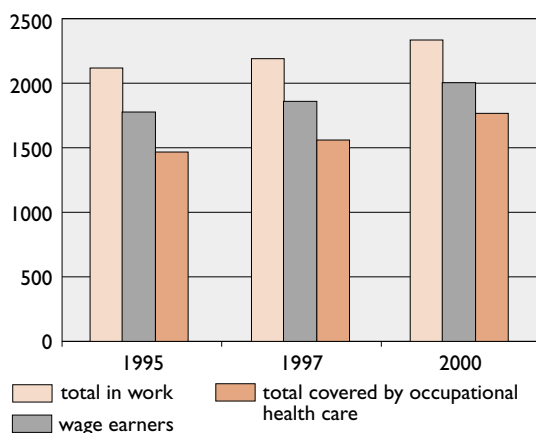


Figure 15. Total in work, wage earners and total covered by occupational health care at the end of 1995 and 2000 (1,000 persons)

accounting should be an organization's strategic goals and core areas of expertise. One of the functions of personnel accounting is to identify the organization's problems and challenges for future development. The areas to be followed should be selected according to the issues that are of primary importance to the long-term development of the organization's operations and human resources. Knowledge of the size, skills and organization of the personnel form the basis for operational planning in the workplace. Follow-up on the achievement of objectives can also benefit from the information generated by personnel reporting: staff skills and developments in work ability and wellbeing at work.

Practical implementation of personnel reporting necessarily involves choices between different styles of presentation.

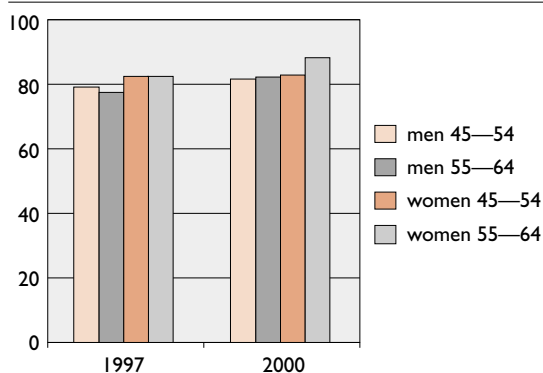


Figure 16. 45–64-year-old wage earners and entrepreneurs in work covered by occupational health care in 1997 and 2000, %

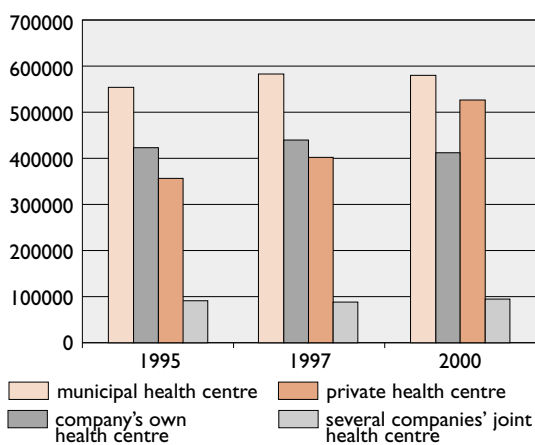


Figure 17. Wage earners covered by occupational health care 1995–2000, according to service provider

Content is constructed on the basis of an organization's objectives and development needs. It is therefore appropriate for the organization to develop a personnel report or personnel accounting tailored to its own needs and presenting the key measurements and figures to this end.

What matters is that reporting follows the selected subject areas and development focuses, thus enabling changes to be observed.

The benefits of personnel reporting from the point of view of ageing workers are closely linked to improvements in work ability and working conditions. Effective monitoring of the impacts of development measures requires reporting to be sufficiently broad and multifaceted, especially in relation to issues of age.

In summarizing the results of the study it is clear that, from the point of view of older workers, personnel reporting offers the following development opportunities:

- one objective could be a flexible monitoring system in which the focus has shifted from the idea of accounting to the perspective of development;
- reporting should include more information on changes in work ability and health;
- reporting should describe the various sub-areas of professional expertise and individual development.

ESF workplace health promotion projects

Assessment of the results of projects (106 altogether) aimed at creating and supporting workplace health promotion (WHP) activities connected with the objectives of the previous funding period of the European Social Fund (ESF) was

completed during the course of 2001. Activities focused on tens of thousands of wage earners and considerably boosted the expertise of the participating companies in issues relating to ageing and wellbeing at work.

The assessment was carried out in cooperation with experts from the Ministry of Labour, who participated in selecting the best practices for publication on the Internet and elsewhere.

The assessment of WHP projects under the ESF has been published in the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's publication series.¹

¹ Liira J and Rasanen M-L: *Uusia näkökulmia työkyvyn ylläpitoon. ESR:n ohjelmakaudella 1995—99 käynnistettyjen työkykyhankkeiden hyvien käytäntöjen arviointi* ('New perspectives on maintaining work ability. An assessment of good practices in workplace health promotion projects launched during the 1995—99 ESF programme period'). *Työsuojelu-julkaisuja 49* ('Occupational safety publications 49'). Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Tampere 2001.

Occupational health care

One of the legislative reforms under the National Programme on Ageing Workers related to occupational health care. The working group on the reform was set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health in January 2000. The Government bill was presented to Parliament in autumn 2001, and the new Act on Occupational Health Care (Työterveyshuoltolaki, 1383/2001) and the related Decrees (1484/2001 and 1485/2001) came into force at the beginning of 2002.

The purpose of the Act on Occupational Health Care is to promote, through cooperation between employers, employees and occupational health care services:

- prevention of work-related illnesses and accidents;
- the healthiness and safety of work and the working environment;
- workers' health, work ability and functional capacity at the various stages of their careers;
- the functioning of the workplace community.

In addition to cooperation between the different actors, the Act also stresses the importance of cooperation with external partners. In accordance with good occupational health care practice, occupational health care requires cooperation with other health care services, the labour administration,

educational authorities, social insurance, social security services and the labour protection authority. If necessary, cooperation partners must include the employers in the common workplace and other partners.

The new Act stresses that occupational health care must be based on the specific needs of the workplace. Occupational health care must be arranged and implemented to the extent required by the work, the working arrangements, personnel, workplace conditions and any changes therein. In this context, 'working arrangements' also refers to risks and problems related to the application of various types of employment relationships such as agency work, part-time work and fixed-term contracts. Working arrangements also refer to matters related to working hours and rest periods, such as night work, shift work, overtime, and adequate rest periods.

Main principle: prevention of health risks

The main principle of occupational health care is to prevent risks to employees' health. The new Act on Occupational Health Care stresses the importance of the statutory task of occupational health care service providers related to assessing any risk of accidents or violence and assessing employees' workload.

The occupational health care service

providers must investigate, assess and monitor employees' work ability and functional capacity, assess any special risk of illness caused by the work, and conduct medical examinations, taking into account the individual characteristics of the employee. In conjunction with medical examinations, occupational health care includes information, advice and guidance in matters concerning the healthiness and safety of the work and the health of the employees. Any suggestions for improvements on the healthiness and safety of the work must include an opportunity to adapt the work to the employee's abilities. Particular attention should be paid to any physical or mental symptoms that could be work-related.

For assessment of employees' workload and suggestions for and implementation of measures to reduce any harmful workload, occupational health care service providers must cooperate with both the employees and the employer. Employees are entitled to request an investigation into their workload, specifically in a situation where they have good reason to suspect that the workload poses a health risk or health problems and where they have displayed physical or mental symptoms that impair their work ability. The occupational health care service provider must assess the validity of this request for investigation and make any necessary suggestions to eliminate or reduce the risks or problems.

The occupational health care provider must monitor and support the ability of disabled employees to cope at work, taking into account the health requirements of the employees. Providing advice on rehabilitation and directing the employee for treatment or medical or vocational rehabilitation may be necessary particularly in cases where measures carried out at the workplace cannot support the employee's work ability. In monitoring the ability of disabled employees to cope at work, occupational health care should make use of the opportunities provided by the cooperation network referred to in the Act.

The occupational health care service providers should contribute to the planning and implementation of measures to maintain and promote work ability, including assessment of an employee's need for rehabilitation, if necessary. In assessing an employee's need for rehabilitation (which should primarily be done by the occupational health care service providers rather than an external service provider), the occupational health care service provider must consider his health, his work, his working environment and his occupational skills.

The Act contains provisions on how employees may request an investigation into their workload and on the obligation of the occupational health care provider to make any necessary suggestions to

adjust the work to the employee's abilities. Methods applicable to situations described above are developed by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, which also provides support to workplaces implementing them.

Under the new Act, emergence of work-related health problems can be prevented. The Act provides an opportunity to create new models for sustaining ageing employees' health and maintain their work ability and functional capacity. Achieving the goals of the Act requires cooperation within the workplace and with outside actors. Development of the occupational health care service system and safeguarding an adequate number of properly skilled occupational health care experts are key issues.

The coverage of occupational health care

The Act on Occupational Health Care applies to any work where the employer has to comply with the Occupational Safety Act. More specifically, in order to ensure that all employees are treated equally, the employer must provide occupational health care services for them irrespective of the company form or the type or length of the employment relationship.

According to a survey on the state of Finnish occupational health care in 2000 conducted by the Finnish Institute of

Occupational Health, occupational health care services covered 170,000 employees. However, there are still many entrepreneurs and other self-employed people, temporary workers and other workers in atypical employment relationships who are not covered by occupational health care services. For instance, occupational health care services reached only 57,000 entrepreneurs (of whom 39,700 were farmers).

There was a positive increase in the coverage of occupational health care services in the late 1990s: more than 75 per cent of all workers and more than 85 per cent of all employees had access to occupational health care services. The majority of the workforce have access to occupational health care services provided by municipal health care centres, while occupational health care services provided by private service providers were by the new millennium outnumbering the occupational health care services maintained by companies themselves. This positive trend is also apparent in the case of ageing workers: in 2000, more than 80 per cent of all employees older than 45 years were covered by occupational health care services.

An employer may arrange occupational health care services by purchasing the services from the local health centre, by providing the services itself or jointly with another employer or by purchasing

them from an organization or person licensed to provide occupational health care services.

According to the survey on the state of Finnish occupational health care, there are about 1,000 occupational health care clinics or units in Finland.

36 per cent of employees were covered by occupational health care services provided by local health centres, 25 per cent by occupational health care clinics maintained by individual companies, 6 per cent by occupational health care clinics maintained jointly by several companies, and 33 per cent by units licensed to provide occupational health care services.

The latest of the various training and development projects designed to ensure employees' access to occupational health care services is an addition to the 'Nilsia Model' where the municipal health centre provides occupational health care services to several other municipalities. The aim is to create a model for ensuring the availability of an occupational health care physician's services through the occupational health care services provided by municipal health centres.

Compensation for costs incurred from occupational health care services

According to the Sickness Insurance Act (Sairausvakuutuslaki 364/1963) employ-

ers, entrepreneurs and other self-employed people are entitled to receive compensation for costs incurred from arranging occupational health care and other health care services.

The Sickness Insurance Act was recently amended with a new section (29b), according to which 60% compensation is to be paid for work based on workplace visits, the actual costs of workplace investigations for developing and monitoring the working environment and the workplace community, costs arising from preparing and checking occupational health care action plans and from related visits to the workplace and for costs incurred from attending meetings of the occupational safety committee.

The Act amending the Sickness Insurance Act came into force on January 1, 2002 and will remain in force for four years.

A project investigating development of occupational health care compensation procedures, with special attention to the problems of entrepreneurs and SMEs was launched at the beginning of 2002.

Training of occupational health care staff

One of the training projects launched under the National Programme on Ageing Workers was aimed at occupational health care staff. Some of the training was part

of other pilot project and development projects aiming, for instance, to develop innovative work methods and procedures for arranging and producing occupational health care services.

Development of the occupational skills of occupational health care professionals and experts was a key objective in the reform of occupational health care legislation.

Under the new Act on Occupational Health Care, occupational health care professionals are occupational health care specialists or other licensed physicians and qualified public health nurses. Occupational health care professionals must have the necessary training for providing occupational health care. Occupational health care experts are qualified physiotherapists or psychologists with sufficient knowledge of occupational health care, persons who have sufficient knowledge of occupational hygiene or ergonomics or technical or other similar education (agricultural experts, opticians, speech therapists, nutritional therapists and fitness experts). They must also have had sufficient training in occupational health care. The qualifications of occupational health care professionals and experts will be determined by Decree.

The Act on Occupational Health Care also contains provisions on further training. Employers of occupational

health care professionals and experts must ensure that these attend further training in occupational health care at least every three years. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health may issue instructions on the content, quality, amount and provision of the training. Maintenance of the health and work ability of ageing workers is also taken into account in the planning of the content and organization of occupational health care training.

Health centres are suffering from a shortage of staff, particularly doctors, which makes it difficult for them to perform the duties assigned to them in the Primary Health Care Act. To ensure the availability of trained personnel in occupational health care, a training centre working on a network basis will be established under the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The training centre will coordinate and organize courses in occupational health care for occupational health care staff, labour protection professionals and other experts in development of working life.

The training of occupational health care specialists will be intensified through virtual training programmes provided by the universities. Development of specialization courses and further qualifications for occupational health care nurses will also be developed, and training will be provided for other experts as well.

According to the survey on the state of Finnish occupational health care, the most urgent topics for training courses are identification of problems related to well-being at work and support for coping at work; support for ageing workers' coping at work ranked the second highest, and working with the workplace community the third highest.

Occupational health care services for farmers

Development of occupational health care provided for farmers is supported by an Act (1042/98) which contains provisions on a central unit for more efficient occupational health care for farmers. This unit was established under the Kuopio Regional Institute of Occupational Health and opened at the beginning of 1999.

Since 1999, the coverage of occupational health care for farmers has risen from 31 per cent to 36 per cent of all those insured under the Farmers' Pension Act, with about 6,000 new farmers in 1999-2001.

The central unit of occupational health care for farmers has had talks with 160 municipalities to improve the occupational health care services provided by municipal health centres. The annual number of farmers using their/?/ services increased from 7,500 in 1996 to 11,000 in 2000. The total costs of the occupational health care were FIM 3.9

million in 1996 and FIM 11.2 million in 2000. In particular, the proportion of investigations into working conditions has increased.

The building industry

On the basis of the proposals of the working group set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health to investigate ways to improve the quality and coverage of occupational health care in the building industry, a statutory register for follow-up of medical checkups under occupational health care was established at the beginning of 2001 under the LEL Employment Pensions Fund. The register contains up-to-date information on the dates of medical checkups of full-time workers in the building industry. The aim is to promote the maintenance of construction workers' health and work ability by providing occupational health care for all workers in the industry.

To develop working conditions in the building industry and prevent and control the risks involved therein, the Tampere Regional Institute of Occupational Health will conduct workplace investigations in each industry. The Institute is also planning to produce a model for medical checkups on ageing construction workers.

Maintenance of the work ability of local government employees and development of occupational health care in 2000-2003

A project on maintaining the work ability of local government employees and developing occupational health care in 2000-2003 aims at developing the well-being, occupational skills and working conditions in municipal social and health care services. Other participants in this project chaired by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health are the Central Finland Central Hospital, Oulu University Central Hospital, Päijät-Häme Central Hospital, Vaasa Central Hospital and the municipalities of Lappeenranta, Nokia and Ylöjärvi.

The project is expected to improve the potential of these organizations for preparing for staff development (resources, skills and new procedures). Development of occupational health care services will aim at providing even better tools and resources for participation in the compilation and interpretation of data on the personnel's work ability and for making suggestions on how to improve operations.

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is one of the means available to active social policy for promoting the work ability and functional capacity of the population. In the second half of the 1990s, rehabilitation measures concentrated increasingly on people over 45 in working life. This was the result of the reform of employment pensions to encourage people to stay on longer in working life and rehabilitation measures by the Social Insurance Institution (KELA) aimed at ageing workers. Maintaining the capacity for work of older unemployed people has been pursued through a joint survey on the service needs of the older long-term unemployed conducted by the labour administration, the social affairs and health administration and KELA.

Employment pension rehabilitation

Vocational rehabilitation organized by the employment pension institutes grew in volume year on year throughout the 1990s. The growth in the numbers participating in rehabilitation and in the costs of rehabilitation are associated with changes in employment pension legislation, clarification of the division of responsibilities between KELA and the employment pension institutes in respect of vocational rehabilitation and increased involvement in rehabilitation by the

employment pension institutes.

In 2000, 4,617 people received vocational rehabilitation under the legislation governing employment pensions. The typical recipient was a 35—55-year-old sufferer from a musculo-skeletal disorder rehabilitated through training for a new line of work. There has been an increase in the proportion of people aged over 44 participating in rehabilitation. In contrast, the proportion of people over 54 in rehabilitation has always been small, at under 10 per cent. Of all rehabilitation services, rehabilitation in the workplace has grown in importance. Training nevertheless remains the most common service form in vocational rehabilitation. In 2000, 54 per cent of recipients of a positive rehabilitation decision were men.

Of those completing rehabilitation in 2000, 43 per cent returned to working life and 32 per cent went on to a pension. The importance of the pre-rehabilitation background was reflected in rehabilitation outcomes. In 2000, of those who were not on a pension or receiving rehabilitation allowance when applying for rehabilitation, 53 per cent returned to work on completing rehabilitation, while 18 per cent went on to a pension (17% in 1997). Of those receiving a pension or rehabilitation allowance, 28 per cent to working life and 51 per cent went on to a pension (against 57% in 1997). In many cases, the original aim of the

rehabilitation programme was partial disability pension. In 2000, one in five participants in rehabilitation who went on to a pension took partial disability pension.

Besides changes to pension legislation, the pension reform that came into effect at the beginning of 2000 also involved other measures to help older workers stay on at work. For instance, there is to be a gradual introduction of a right to early assessment of rehabilitation need for employees insured under the employment pension system. A trial based on a research project by the employment pension institutes will initially focus on 58—59-year-olds.

As early a start as possible to rehabilitation and more effective methods of employment pension rehabilitation were the aim of a rehabilitation and work ability assessment network project (*Kuntoutus- ja työkyvyn arviointiverkosto – (KUTVE) projekti*) run jointly by the labour market organizations and the employment pension institutes. The Insurance Rehabilitation Association (VIKKI) implemented the project during 2000—2002.

The project promoted two types of cooperation:

- recognition of the need for early rehabilitation relating to the threat of disability coupled with local action linked to the process of clarifying this need; and
- cooperation between the purchasers

(employment pension institutes) and producers (occupational clinics and rehabilitation centres) of rehabilitation services relating to the organization of rehabilitation examinations and work experiments.

The project also did work on the criteria of functional capacity and ways of measuring it. It also included an assessment of the health insurance physician's statements (B statement) attached to applications for disability pension and organized training for more than 900 occupational health care professionals.

ASLAK and TYK

In order to maintain and improve the work ability of people in work, the Social Insurance Institution (KELA) developed during the 1990s a form of vocationally oriented medical rehabilitation (ASLAK). Most ASLAK activities are organized as multiperiod courses in rehabilitation centres designed for specific workplaces or professions, and to an increasing degree also in the form of outpatient rehabilitation. ASLAK is one of KELA's main areas of emphasis in rehabilitation and has attracted more and more funding year on year. In 2000, a good 13,700 people received ASLAK rehabilitation, of whom just under 9,000 were aged 45—54, and around 1,000 were over 55. This cost a total of FIM 159 million.

According to fresh research by KELA's research and development unit, ASLAK improves subjective work ability and quality of life much more among women than men. The costs of ASLAK for women are also slightly lower than for men.

Training designed to maintain and enhance work capacity (TYK) is meant especially for ageing employees with a long career behind them. It is organized in cooperation with the employee, the workplace and a rehabilitation centre. The numbers participating in TYK training have grown year on year. Growth is focused mainly on 55—64-year-olds, whose proportion of all participants in TYK training was one third higher in 2000 than in 1997. In 2000, TYK was organized for a total of 6,700 people, at a total cost of FIM 109 million.

A study into the effectiveness of TYK training was completed in 2001. It indicated that the effects were clearer when measures were also directed at the workplace community and the workplace as a whole.

In 2001, the Ministry of social Affairs and Health, STAKES and the Advisory Board for Rehabilitation's research department cooperated in producing a more extensive assessment of the effectiveness of the different forms of early rehabilitation. Positive changes were noted in symptoms, functional capacity

and mental health. Some evidence was also found to indicate that rehabilitation can influence objective public health risk criteria (such as blood pressure, cholesterol and obesity).

The evidence on sick leave is more complex. Early rehabilitation has been able to slow the growth in sick leave among people threatened by reduced work ability. But if work ability has already suffered by the time rehabilitation begins, the present evidence is not sufficient to assess the effectiveness of rehabilitation.

It is also not possible to draw any conclusions on the effects of early rehabilitation on pension take-up. Short rehabilitation interventions, such as back treatment or behavioural therapy, can reduce the level of experienced symptoms, but nothing is known of their effects on work ability or mental health.

Although the aim of early rehabilitation is to influence both the individual and his operating environment, no research has been done on measures targeting work and the workplace community. The impact of measures on pension take-up and sick leave also require further study. Very little research has been done into the cost-effectiveness of early rehabilitation, and no conclusions can be drawn on the basis of existing knowledge.

Survey of the service needs of the older long-term unemployed

A survey of the service needs of the older long-term unemployed conducted by the labour administration, KELA and the social affairs and health administration was launched in 1996 in ten cities and extended at the beginning of 1998 to cover the whole of Finland. The survey focused on long-term unemployed people in the 50—58 age group, of whom KELA takes responsibility for those with health problems. The aim was to establish their need for rehabilitation and other services, and where necessary to use rehabilitation to help them take control of their lives and/or activate and support a possible return to working life.

In the first phase, KELA directed these clients to rehabilitation needs survey or a rehabilitation examination. Where necessary, they were then directed into rehabilitation. Together with the service providers, KELA has developed vocationally oriented or life management oriented courses to meet the needs of these clients. The clients sent to these courses are those who, in the light of their rehabilitation needs survey or rehabilitation examination, are expected to benefit from a systematic rehabilitation process involving alternate residential periods and interludes or periods of work practice. In 1998, a good 3,000 people took part in the service needs survey for

the older long-term unemployed, with almost 5,500 in 1999, and around 4,700 in 2000. The costs of this form of rehabilitation totalled around FIM 18 million in 1998, FIM 48 million in 1999 and FIM approximately FIM 43 million in 2000.

Starting in 2001, this form of rehabilitation has only been offered to 50—54-year-olds.

Contributions to the National Programme

on Ageing Workers by institutions under the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health

The involvement of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in the National Programme on Ageing Workers has been set down in the annual performance agreement between the Institute and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Focus areas within the programme for the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in 2000-2002 consisted of the age management training programme and of generally helping ageing people stay on at work through workplace health promotion (WHP) activities and developing WHP methods.

Other age-related activities included drafting health check criteria for ageing workers in support of the work of occupational health care providers. A survey of equality in working life was conducted, paying special attention to equality among the middle-aged. A 'tool-box' for equality work was also created, which can be used by workplace communities themselves to evaluate their own level of equality and planning measures to improve equality and promote tolerance of differences.

For over 20 years now, the Finnish In-

stitute of Occupational Health has been conducting research mainly in the municipal sector on problems affecting ageing workers, focusing on areas such as workload, work ability, disability, well-being at work and vocational competence. The Institute's research has produced a wealth of internationally respected scientific articles, and also hundreds of specialized vocational articles or other publications, including guides, methodologies and instructions for use in occupational health care, occupational safety, personnel management and corporate management.

When the fundamental phenomena involved in how ageing affects work had been researched, it became possible to develop a measure for work ability, the work ability index, which makes it possible to assess not only a person's present work ability, but also to forecast it for several years ahead. It also became possible to identify the factors in work, the working environment, the workplace community, and the organization of work which undermine the work ability forecast, as well as factors which support

retained work ability or even improve it.¹ This research on fundamental factors, which still continues, has created a very solid foundation for further projects in the 1990s and post-2000.

Programme on appreciation of the ageing

In 1990-1996, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health carried out a project called *Ikääntyvä arvoonsa* ('Appreciate the ageing'), with the aim of influencing the practical working conditions of ageing workers. The aim was specifically to develop operating models and frames of reference for ageing and work and to test them in practical projects.²

The strategy of the programme was based on practical testing and impact assessment of measures designed to promote the health, work ability and well-being of ageing workers. The strategy comprised measures which influenced 1) the physical stress of the work and the working conditions (e.g. ergonomics, occupational safety), 2) the workplace community and the organization of work (e.g. workplace development, psycho-social factors, management, working hours), and 3) the health and resources of

the individual (healthy lifestyles, exercise).

The main cooperation partners were the top management and supervisors of companies and organizations, employees and their representatives, occupational health care and occupational safety. The aim was for broad-based cooperation focusing on the broadest possible development of work, the working environment and the workplace community, and on reinforcing the health and resources of individual employees.

The *Ikääntyvä arvoonsa* programme was implemented through research and development projects, service projects, provision of training and training materials, and the dissemination of information. Projects were implemented at companies in different sectors, industry (metals and engineering, textile, building) and local and central government. The programme also studied employers' and employees' attitudes to retirement and examined labour legislation from the point of view of ageing workers. The training materials produced included three textbooks.

After the end of the programme, the information and experiences it produced continued to be useful when a committee

¹ Ilmarinen J, Tuomi K, Eskelinen L, Nygård C-H, Huuhtanen P and Klockars M: Summary and recommendations of a project involving cross-sectional and follow-up studies on the aging workers in Finnish municipal occupations. *Scand J Work Environ Health* 17 (1991): Suppl 1, 135-141.

² Ilmarinen J and Louhevaara V (eds.): *Ikääntyvä arvoonsa-ikäntyvien työntekijöiden terveyden, työkyvyn ja hyvinvoinnin edistämisohjelma 1990-1996. Työ ja ihminen. Tutkimusraportti 17. Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki 2001.*

appointed by the Government in 1996 set out to support and promote the employment of ageing workers.³ The committee presented 40 proposed measures, which the National Programme on Ageing Workers then set about putting into practice.

During the Finnish Presidency of the EU, an unofficial conference of labour and social affairs ministers was held, the agenda including how to help ageing people stay on at work and find work in the Member States. A book on ageing workers in Finland and the EU was published as background material for the conference,⁴ and this was used in the ministerial discussions and a number of other discussions on the subject.

Age management training

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health started the age management training programme under the slogan *Ihmisen ikäkaudet johtamisen haasteena* ('The stages of life as management challenge'). The aim was to support different organizations in development projects for managers and supervisors which helped promote the work ability

and employment of ageing workers and the performance of the organization. The target groups of the training were people in management positions, personnel management and training organizations. The project was implemented under the coordination of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health in cooperation between four other training organizations: the Finnish Institute of Public Management (HAUS), the management college FEMDI, Kuntakoulutus Oy (a training company owned by the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities) and the Institute for Management and Technological Training (POHTO).⁵

The aim of the project was to increase awareness of age-related issues, encourage more positive attitudes toward ageing employees, identify best practices and boost training organizations' expertise on ageing.

In connection with the training programme, a network of over 100 experts on training was set up and 10 seminars were arranged for the people providing training for trainers. Over 20 training seminars were also arranged for the actual target groups in various locations all over Finland, and a total of 868 people took

³ Ikääntyvä työelämässä. Ikääntyvien työllistämisedellytysten parantamista selvittäneen komitean mietintö 1996:14. Helsinki 1996.

⁴ Ilmarinen J: Ikääntyvä työntekijä Suomessa ja Euroopean Unionissa. Työterveyslaitos, sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö ja työministeriö. Helsinki 1999.

⁵ Punnonen O and Lindgren G: Ikäjohtamisen koulutushanke. Toimintaraportti vuosilta 1999-2002. Työterveyslaitos 29.1.2002. Helsinki.

part. A great deal of training material, numerous reports and brochures were also produced.

The 'Work together for work ability' project

The purpose of the project was to transfer the WHP methods developed by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health to the everyday operations of small and medium-sized enterprises. A total of 20 companies in different sectors took part in the project and improved their practical WHP operations. Their projects will be evaluated and the best practices identified will be published and used in training provision.^{6,7}

Once the labour market organizations had agreed on WHP actions in the 1990 collective agreement, the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health began to develop approaches and paradigms, methods and content for WHP activities in daily working life.^{8,9} The development work in question was largely based on the

Institute's previous research on ageing and work ability. The work ultimately resulted in a broad selection of WHP approaches, which was placed at the disposal of occupational health care providers and individual workplaces in the form of training, textbooks, guides to best practices and general information provision.

WHP activity now covers most Finnish workplaces and evaluation studies on its effectiveness have found WHP activity profitable in terms of both health and work ability on the one hand, and business performance¹⁰. Detailed WHP guides were produced for occupational health care staff on subjects such as good health care practices, monitoring and assessment of WHP promotion by occupational health care providers¹¹ and an operating and evaluation model for WHP steps in the workplace,¹² circulated in 100,000 copies.

WHP projects were implemented at over 300 companies from many different

⁶ Hankekilpailu — Työkyky tehdään yhdessä. Työterveyslaitos, tideote, 29.10.1999.

⁷ STM 2002: <http://www.vn.fi/stm/suomi/ajankoht/tyokyky/tyokykytehdään yhdessä.htm>

⁸ Rantanen J: Työympäristö, työterveyshuolto ja työkykyä ylläpitävä toiminta. 43-54. Kirjassa: Työkykyä ylläpitävä toiminta ja työterveyshuolto. Seminaariraportti. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. Helsinki. 1992.

⁹ Matikainen E, Aro T, Kalimo R, Ilmarinen J and Torstila I (eds.): Hyvä työkyky — työterveyslaitos ja Eläkevakuutusyhtiö Ilmarinen. helsinki 1996.

¹⁰ Peltomäki P, Viluksela M, Husman K, Kauppinen T, Pirttilä I, Räsänen K, Savolainen H, Suurnäkki T and Tuomi T: Työkykyä ylläpitävä toiminta suomalaisilla työpaikoilla vuonna 2001. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö ja Työterveyslaitos, Helsinki 2002.

¹¹ Liira J, Hallberg A, Ylikoski M, Klemetti M, Koskinen H and Räsänen K: Työkyvyn edistäminen, seuranta ja arviointi työterveyshuollossa. Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki 1999.

¹² Työpaikan TKY-step, askeleet kohti hyvinvointia työpaikalla. Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki.

sectors within the small workplace programme. Researchers from the Institute also carried out more detailed evaluations of the economic implications of WHP activity in 200 different companies. In a majority of the companies, projects were found to be extremely profitable in terms of the cost/benefit ratio.¹³

Experts from the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health have taken part in

many evaluation projects on the implementation and effectiveness of WHP activity. Such projects included evaluation of WHP projects implemented in connection with ESF projects,¹⁴ evaluation of government sector WHP projects,¹⁵ evaluation of a three-year WHP project in the metals industry (ABB),¹⁶ a survey of the economic impact of work ability,¹⁷ and evaluation of WHP training.¹⁸

¹³ Ahonen G, Bjurström L-M and Hussi T: Työkykyä ylläpitävän toiminnan taloudelliset vaikutukset. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö, Kansaneläkelaitos ja Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki 2001.

¹⁴ Liira J and Rasanen M-L: Uusia näkökulmia työkyvyn ylläpitoon. ESR:n ohjelmakaudella 1995-99 käynnistettyjen työkykyhankkeiden hyvien käytäntöjen arviointi. Työsuojelu-julkaisuja 49. Sosiaali- ja terveysministeriö. Tampere 2001. (15)

⁵ Rasanen M-L and Liira J: Edistyykö hyvinvointi. Valtion työkykyhankkeiden arviointitutkimus. Työterveyslaitos ja Valtiokonttori. Helsinki 1999. (16)

¹⁶ Leppänen A, Elo A-L, Ilmarinen J and Alanko O: Parempaa työkykyä tavoittelemassa. Kolmivuotisen työkyky-ohjelman evaluointi. Työ ja ihminen. Tutkimusraportti 19. Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki 2001.

¹⁷ Anttonen H, Piikivi L, Vuolteenaho A and Kopperoinen I: Työkyvyn taloudelliset vaikutukset. Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki 1998.

¹⁸ Rasanen L, Jouttimäki L and Punnonen O: Välineitä huomise työkykyyn. Työterveyslaitoksen ja Työeläkelaitosten liiton työky-koulutuksen arviointi. Työterveyslaitos. Helsinki 2000.

National Research and Development Centre for Welfare and Health (STAKES)

Decisions to retire or stay on at work are influenced by many different factors, some of which tend to force people out of working life, e.g. perceived stresses of work, undermined health and workplace community problems. Many other factors also attract people away from working life; these are mainly connected with the pension system, incentives in the social protection system and problems with coordinating work and family life.

There are also many different factors which influence the health and wellbeing at work of a company's employees, and these may involve issues such as the organization's support functions and methods used for introducing changes, the functioning of the workplace community, changes in the content of work, the structure of the work unit and how it is managed, and also the competence, life situation, ageing and lifestyles of employees. There are great differences between the sectors, organizations, work units and employees on the labour market in terms of these factors.

A number of studies have indisputably established the link between work and health. This is not merely a case of a link between the physical working environment and health, but also a link between

the psychological and social stresses of work with cardiovascular mortality, morbidity and absenteeism. As a consequence, various research-based development actions have been applied in an effort to reduce the physical, psychological and social risk factors in work. There is, however, little evidence or solid research results on just what kind of exposure or change in exposure levels actually leads to a deterioration in health.

Working life in the social welfare and health care sector

Extensive restructuring of operating models and service structures was carried out in the social welfare and health care sector in order to boost efficiency during the recession. During the last decade, employees in the sector have been working in changed conditions of increased pressure and expectations at work. Although some of the restructuring measures were intended to improve staff wellbeing, too, the growing pressures of work and the constant process of change have impacted on the functioning of workplace communities and been reflected in employee wellbeing in the form of increased sick leave and record volumes of early retirement. The stress on

social welfare and health care sector staff has clearly increased over the last decade.

Sick leave in the entire municipal sector, and especially in specialist medical care, has been monitored over the last few years and the trend is disquieting. Early retirement due to disability/inability to work has been widespread especially among home help service staff, mental health nurses and practical nurses. The other forms of early retirement which are not tied to the physical burden of work are more widespread among more highly trained occupational groups.

In the coming years, the social welfare and health care sector is expected to maintain its capacity for change in conditions where a large proportion of its staff is about to retire and the service need is expected to grow as the population ages. This places even greater pressure on personnel policy in terms of improving staff skills, making the work on offer more attractive and maintaining the work ability of existing staff.

Target situations and groups

The results of a project on the coordination of work and family life implemented at STAKES in 1996-2000 showed that successful coordination of work and family life improves wellbeing at work and the general atmosphere in the workplace and it is also a way of making an organization a more attractive

workplace. Thus, changing the workplace procedures for coordinating work and family life can considerably improve wellbeing at work. The results of the project showed that this does not just apply to employees with small children, but also to employees with school-age children and increasingly those who are helping their own ageing parents cope with daily life. The parents of most middle-aged people in work are still living, and about half of these employees are helping their parents cope with everyday tasks. This aspect of the coordination of work and family life will become increasingly important, and workplaces will need to ensure that procedures for the coordination of work and family life are adapted to employees in different life situations.

One problematic group in terms of returning to working life and staying there are the long-term unemployed. It is known that physical and mental health tend to deteriorate the longer unemployment continues. On the other hand, it is also known that individually tailored network services in support of activation and rehabilitation can encourage people to return to working life.

Activation processes take a long time and are highly service-intensive, and they require cooperation between the social welfare and health care sector and the labour administration. Since this is a question of people who are clients of

several different sectors, the work requires flexible project-type structures as intermediaries between the service sectors. Rehabilitation has a broad significance in general as a way of putting off retirement. Research on the effectiveness of rehabilitation represents a challenge for the future.

STAKES' own perspective

STAKES is one of the actors involved in improving wellbeing at work, but the main role here among the institutions subject to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health belongs to the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. Wellbeing at work can only be achieved through cooperation between all the different institutions, however. STAKES has a special interest in helping social welfare and health care staff stay on at work and postpone early retirement. In this area, STAKES cooperates with the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Local Government Pensions Institution and the universities. Generally speaking, wellbeing at work and reduction of work-related stress are part of the purview of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The coordination of work and family life involves a number of administrative sectors and several institutions subject to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, and there is cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, the labour market

organizations and the universities. The long-term unemployed are clients of several administrative sectors and research on activation and rehabilitation is pursued by the Social Insurance Institution, the Rehabilitation Foundation and the Ministry of Labour. In this area, the interest of STAKES focuses particularly on the prevention of exclusion. STAKES has projects in this area in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour and the Rehabilitation Foundation.

STAKES is contributing to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health's target of helping people stay on at work for 2-3 years longer than they do at present in four ways:

Firstly, STAKES produces and disseminates information on employee wellbeing, health, retirement welfare and factors which jeopardize health and cause early retirement in different sectors of social welfare and health care.

Secondly, STAKES is developing practical models for the coordination of work and family life.

Thirdly, STAKES is conducting research on the effectiveness of activation measures for the long-term unemployed and promoting activating practices based on cooperation between different authorities.

Fourthly, there are a number of STAKES projects in progress on improving staff competence and operating

models in the social welfare and health care sector, and also on improving the wellbeing of employees in the sector (including those involved in mental health work).

Main projects in 2002

STAKES is about to launch a cohort study (2002-2006) in close cooperation with the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Local Government Pensions Institution on the short and long-term effects of the psychosocial risk factors affecting the main occupational groups in the social welfare and health care sector on staff health, early retirement and the tendency to change to other occupations.

New information on the effects of these psychosocial risk factors on staff health, early retirement and the quality of care will be produced through the HoiToVa project, participation in the hospital staff wellbeing project of the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the University of Helsinki, the wellbeing at work project for municipal employees and a study coordinated by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health on the working conditions of employees in the social welfare and health care sector.

STAKES continues to promote workplace development within the ESF project on improving the coordination of work and family life in the workplace

(2001-2004). The project is studying how to put the coordination of work and family life on the agenda in workplaces and how to make it a permanent component of personnel policy. Extensive information dissemination and training activities aimed at the labour market organizations and others are an essential part of the project.

In 2001-2003, STAKES is carrying out follow-up and assessment of the new legislation on rehabilitating work experience which entered into force on September 1, 2001, in cooperation with the Rehabilitation Foundation. The study will evaluate the effects of the legislation and its implementation using a large sample of 57 municipalities and their employment offices. The main question of the study is how the legislative change will affect the labour market position, resources, and life management of the unemployed who are its target group. The project will also develop and evaluate activation based on the perspective of social welfare and employment offices.

STAKES is involved in cooperation on research and development projects with the biggest urban municipalities, which will be involved in an experiment on combined services in 2002-2003; this involves developing networked service models which coordinate local resources so as to activate the long-term unemployed. During the experiment, the municipal-

ities, the labour administration and the Social Insurance Institution will brainstorm together to create combined client service packages which support the client's own activation, rehabilitation and employment better than current models. STAKES is taking part in planning service models and methods and in evaluating the experiment.

There are also many other research and development projects on social welfare and health care services in progress at STAKES which have a bearing on the content of work, competence and staff health and wellbeing. These projects have been presented elsewhere.

The National Public Health Institute

The assignment of the National Public Health Institute is to promote, study and monitor public health. As part of its brief, the Institute has carried out a number of population studies whose target group has often been the working age population, and in recent years increasingly the entire adult lifespan. While the Institute has not performed any studies focusing specifically on the 45-64 age group targeted by the National Programme on Ageing Workers, most of its population studies cover this age group, and research data are thus easily available.

Ageing people in the Institute's research

The National Public Health Institute's research has been focusing more on the elderly in recent years. In the semantic sense, these research projects usually defined *ikääntynyt* (literally the old or elderly) as people aged over 64. Therefore, the target group of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, which is clearly younger than this, could be described as ageing workers. [In the English translation *ikääntyvä* has been translated as 'ageing', and *ikääntynyt* as 'older'.]

The state of health, lifestyles and

functional capacity of ageing people has been studied at five-year intervals in the form of the FINRISKI surveys, most recently in 1997, and every other year in a questionnaire on adult health (AVTK). These studies place special emphasis on cardiovascular diseases and their risk factors, but they also give data on general health and functional capacity. An extensive survey has been compiled based on the AVTK questionnaires, examining the impact of the recession on public health and health-related lifestyles (Luoto R, Helakorpi S, Uutela A. *Lama ja terveys* ('The recession and health'). KTL:n julkaisuja B10, 1999).

The survey presents the National Programme on Ageing Workers' target group, 45—64-year-olds, as a separate group. There were no major changes in the state of health in this group, but there was a negative tendency in certain lifestyle factors which affect health. The changes were most noticeable among the unemployed.

An extensive survey called Health 2000 which focused on the entire adult population of Finland was carried out in 2000-2001, and detailed information will soon be available on the health and functional capacity of the ageing. This

survey is particularly valuable because it used partly the same measuring methods as the *Mini-Suomi* survey of 20 years ago, which also focused on a representative sample of the entire adult population of Finland. Comparison of the results of these two studies will make it possible to draw conclusions about changes in the health and functional capacity of ageing Finns.

The Health 2000 survey also included detailed study of working conditions, work ability and burnout. The use of a representative sample of the entire population will produce a more precise picture of the work ability and functional capacity of the ageing than earlier, more limited research results.

Results

Preliminary results seem to indicate that the health and functional capacity of ageing Finns has improved over the last decades. The fall in cardiovascular diseases in this age group has particularly contributed to this positive development. Where other diseases are concerned, there have been some changes for the better, but also some changes for the worse, all smaller in volume, however, than the reduction in cardiovascular disease. Another fact worth noting is that the functional capacity of Finnish people both of working age and pensioners has improved in recent years. The functional capacity of elderly people shows no significant deterioration until after the age of 75.

The role of the Ministry of Labour

in the National Programme on Ageing Workers

The main objective set for the National Programme on Ageing Workers by the Ministry of Labour was to raise the employment rate of people over 45 by helping them stay on at work and by helping the unemployed find work.

Focuses of operations in 1998-2002

In 1998, the Ministry focused on information provision and the creation of cooperation networks. Research activities were also initiated.

In 1999, the focus shifted to research and training. The special themes of the Ministry of Labour included age management, working time and the division of labour, entrepreneurship, improved training, discrimination and how to prevent it, labour administration personnel training and certain R&D projects. The implementation of these themes was supported by the dissemination of information. A project group from the Ministry took part in the preparations for an unofficial meeting of the Council of Ministers during the Finnish Presidency of the EU dealing with the ageing of the workforce.

Towards the end of the programme, the Ministry's *IKÄ* ('Age') project concentrated on schemes to support the implementation of employment policy. Its main areas of focus included supporting the reform of operating procedures in the labour administration and boosting the effectiveness of employment policy on the target group.

The age management campaign which began in 1999 continued in 2000 and a new campaign called *Hyvä Ikä* (Prime Years) was also launched. Both campaigns disseminated information and organized seminars with a view to increasing awareness of age management and other best practices. They also served to expand the labour administration's contact network and strengthen its client contacts, helping to draw in new clients. Separate information programmes also continued in order to advertise the good examples discovered in the course of various workplace development programmes and to support communications and information provision in customer services.

In 2001, the operations were still mainly focused on promoting age management and other best practices. With the support of the National Pro-

gramme on Ageing Workers, the labour market departments of employment and economic development centres took an active part in an information campaign emphasizing the regional point of view. Apart from age management, the campaign disseminated information on the services of the labour administration, regional projects, and best practices. In addition, the year saw the publication of a study on age management, the findings of which were widely used in communications and seminars.

The public employment services paid more attention to the situation of the ageing. In 2001, the Ministry launched a project charting the pension options of the long-term unemployed. The target group consists mainly of people over 45. Special appropriations were allocated to active employment measures targeted at the unemployed between 55 and 59 years of age.

Employment policy

The measures of the Ministry of Labour within the National Programme on Ageing Workers are linked to the practical implementation of employment policy, workplace development and communications.

The Ministry is using staff training and experimental and development operations to help improve the operating procedures and service systems of the labour

administration so as to enhance the labour market status of ageing workers and decrease their risk of exclusion. Another objective was to mainstream the ageing issue throughout the operations of the labour administration.

Labour administration staff training

Topics related to the subject of the ageing workforce have been included in various parts of the labour administration staff training programme. The issue has been successfully mainstreamed within the Ministry's staff training programme.

Training seminars were arranged in support of the regional information provision of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, and the Ministry organized a separate supplementary staff training programme. The aim was to improve practical customer services in particular and to fine-tune the operating procedures and customer interaction of the labour administration so as to give ageing workers more tailor-made solutions on the labour market and to prevent exclusion.

The training was designed to influence the attitudes of labour administration staff, teaching them to recognize and appreciate the strengths of ageing clients and apply them more effectively in working life. The contents of the training programmes focused on

the maintenance of individual workers' work ability and functional capacity and on business economics and the national economy. The aim of the training programme was to create common guidelines for the entire administration on how to serve ageing clients.

In 1998, the Ministry of Labour organized an instructor training course for persons nominated by the employment and economic development centres and the employment offices, and two supplementary training courses for customer service employees working with ageing workers.

In 1999, three regional training periods of three days each were organized for employees of the employment and economic development centres and employment offices. The themes covered included structural change in working life, the status and strengths of the ageing on the labour market, how to improve customer services, tailored employment policy measures for the ageing/older people, and wellbeing at work.

In 2000, two three-day seminars entitled "Ikääntyvä osaa — vanheneva taitaa" ('Ageing people have skills') were organized, discussing the labour market status of ageing workers and the effectiveness of the measures targeted at this group. Other topics addressed at these seminars included the development of customer service at employment offices

and how their employees cope with their work.

Two training days on employment pension rehabilitation were organized jointly with the Central Pension Security Institute and the Uusimaa Employment and Economic Development Centre. The most important topics covered were vocational rehabilitation and the cooperation involved.

In 2001, the Ministry organized a national seminar on future reforms in employment services for the staff of employment and economic development centres and employment offices. The seminar also discussed the new services available for people seeking occupational training, the views on ageing presented in various studies and their effects, and age management.

Experiments and development projects

The experiments and development projects carried out by the Ministry of Labour sought to discover new training methods and contents in order to bring training closer to working life and to improve services for ageing workers. The following is a description of the most important projects carried out with support from the National Programme on Ageing Workers.

Training experiment in Northern Ostrobothnia

Between 1998 and 1999, the Employment and Economic Development Centre of Northern Ostrobothnia, the employment office of Oulainen and the Oulainen Institute carried out a joint regional training experiment. The project included training on cooperatives and further development of the operating model of the development centre for service entrepreneurs. The target group comprised mainly local unemployed people aged over 45. In order to secure continuity of operations and experiment with tutoring and mentoring, a number of newly graduated young unemployed people were also included.

In connection with the two six-month courses, two cooperatives were founded which periodically employ nearly 20 people. Some course participants found work in other companies and some changed their occupations. It was also decided that a business incubator should be established. A shop, attached to the Institute and run by its students, was set up to sell and market the products of local entrepreneurs and craftsmen.

In connection with the project, a network organization comprising five different fields of education was created and a survey was carried out on the training needs of local service entrepreneurs, based on which tailored

training packages were provided for 65 enterprises. The Institute also cooperated with village committees, organizations for the unemployed, and the Handicrafts and Applied Arts Association of Northern Ostrobothnia. The final report on the project was completed on May 30, 1999 (Palveluyrittäjyyden kehittämiskeskus. Oulaisten Instituutti. Loppuraportti. Moniste 1999.)

Training experiment in Southern Ostrobothnia

Between 1999 and 2000, a project promoting the information and communications technology (ICT) skills of people over 45 ("Etelä-Pohjanmaa ensimmäiseksi +45 tietotekniikka osaamisessa", a.k.a. EP+45) was carried out in Southern Ostrobothnia.

The project was carried out by the labour market department of the regional employment and economic development centre and the education department of the Western Finland provincial State office's Vaasa unit. The aim was to teach basic ICT skills to as many people over 45 as possible.

In order to help ageing people assimilate the new information, the study groups were small and the teaching involved a lot of practical exercises, including the opportunity to practise at home using the institution's portable computers.

According to student feedback, increased skills and the consequent increase in self-confidence were considered the most important outcome of the course. The students no longer stood in awe of computers and had learned basic ICT skills. They considered the training necessary and also expressed interest in further training. Practice was thought to be very important for learning and maintaining computer skills. The students listed the need for a longer training period, more individual teaching and even more opportunities for practical training and further training as the most important development targets. The final report on the EP+45 project was completed in September 2000.

Jobseekers' occupational health project

Between 1999 and 2000, the Seinäjoki employment office and the Seinäjoki region joint municipal board for health care carried out a joint project called 'Jobseekers' occupational health care — the Seinäjoki network model' (or 'Jobseekers' occupational health' project). The aim was to promote jobseekers' work ability, health and labour market eligibility and to enhance their opportunities for finding employment. A further objective was to reduce overlapping work by different authorities and increase their familiarity with the

nature of one another's operations and their inherent possibilities.

During the trial project, occupational health care services for the unemployed were expanded: the public health nurse in charge of these services was assigned a team comprising a variety of health care professionals and given access to the health care centre's data network. The medical expert consulted by the employment office, an occupational health physician, was also involved in project implementation. The service point was located next to the employment office.

The services were used by some 480 persons, over half of whom did so for the first time. Further appointments were made for 12% of the clients. Most of them were seeking advice on a distinct illness or symptom. According to a customer survey most of the users were satisfied with the service. Medical examinations were also considered necessary. The networking of cooperation partners was successful. On the basis of these results, the occupational health care operations for the unemployed continued after the trial period. The trial project received its funding from the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health through the National Programme on Ageing Workers. The final report on the project was completed in July 2001.

An intensive, active exercise programme for increased training capacity — an ESF project

The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, the Uusimaa Employment and Economic Development Centre and the adult education centres Adulta and Amiedu carried out a joint ESF project with the aim of looking into the general fitness level of the unemployed, the practical implementation of the exercise programme introduced to their training and its impact on fitness.

The main objective was to enhance the physical fitness of labour market training participants by means of an exercise programme based on active learning. The project also explored the correlation between physical fitness and the trainees' motivation, learning capacity, perceived health and employment potential.

An initial study showed that the participants were in poor physical condition, in terms of both work ability and health. Only a few participants were well equipped to meet the physical requirements of working life. However, the exercise project increased the number of people in good or average physical condition for their age. The introduction of supervised exercise to labour market training proved particularly motivating for those trainees who had done little or no sport before the programme.

The results of the project strengthened

the view that health care services for the unemployed should focus more on enhancing their work ability. The exercise included in labour market training should encourage the trainees to change their lifestyle to include more exercise and healthier habits and help them maintain this new lifestyle. The Ministry of Labour sponsored the dissemination of the project's findings with the funds allocated to the National Programme on Ageing Workers.

The final report on the project was completed in July 2001 (*Työkunto ja työtömyys — liikunta osana työvoimakoulutusta*, Työterveyslaitos, Fysiologian osasto ('Work ability and unemployment — the introduction of sports to labour market training', the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Department of Physiology)

A survey on the service needs of the older long-term unemployed

An extensive project involving several administrative sectors (the IP project) related to Finland's Employment Programme 1996-1999 was carried out to survey the employment potential, training and rehabilitation needs, and the pension options of the older (aged 50-58) long-term unemployed in ten different municipalities.

The project was carried out under the supervision of and according to a joint action plan drawn up by the Ministry of Labour, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Social Insurance Institution (KELA), the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities and the Federation of Employment Pension Institutions. Employment offices interviewed almost 11,000 older long-term unemployed. The survey is based on these individual interviews and the subsequent rehabilitation need reports or rehabilitation examinations organized by public health care, KELA or the labour authorities. Local cooperation across administrative boundaries was an important factor in the implementation of this project and produced good results.

The service needs survey made it clear that intensified services are needed to establish the employment potential, training and rehabilitation needs, and pension options of the older (aged 50-58) long-term unemployed. The Government therefore decided in principle that further service needs surveys were to be carried out nationwide. In connection with the 1998 budget proposal, Parliament approved supplementary allocations to rehabilitation measures organized by the labour authorities and KELA in order to extend the service needs surveys for the older long-term unemployed to the whole country as of the beginning of 1998. The extensive follow-up study on the IP

project produced several sub-reports. The final report on the project, *Yksilölliset palvelut ja ikääntyneiden pitkäaikaistyöttömyys* ('Individual services and long-term unemployment among older people'; ed. M. Rajavaara), was published in June 2000.

Workplace development

The labour administration's workplace development measures emphasize the role of ageing workers as a resource that is needed while they are still of working age. Ageing has been included in all Finland's workplace development programmes in one way or another. The fundamental principle of these workplace development programmes, cooperation between the social partners in order to enhance productivity, is in line with the interests of the ageing, too. However, expertise in workplace development methods that promote life-long learning or increase motivation is not yet at the same level as the analysis of social welfare and health care issues. This is why workplace development programmes still place a great deal of emphasis on spearhead projects that create methods and operating procedures.

Promoting age management

The Ministry of Labour and its cooperation partners carried out a

campaign on age management that began in May 1999. The campaign and related information effort sought to support the other aspects of the National Programme on Ageing Workers in order to advance age management. The campaign focused on the development of practical management tools and their correct usage in companies, especially in the SME sector. The campaign took the form of training for consultants, employers, and the staff of employment and economic development centres and employment offices.

The campaign sought to offer ideas for operations that the employment and economic development centres in particular could introduce through their employer contacts and various projects. The aim was to advertise best practices and expand contact networks.

The campaign included regional seminars in different parts of the country. The topics covered included issues related to personnel balance sheets, the learning processes of the ageing, transfer of business between generations, and workplace and business development. The campaign continued through the events arranged and material distributed under the Prime Years campaign.

Age management research

Pauli Juuti, research director of the Finnish Employees Management Develop-

ment Institute (FEMDI), carried out a study on age management based on group interviews, a questionnaire with 777 respondents, and a total of 80 separate workplace-specific interviews from 8 different workplaces. The data was collected in 2000. Respondents to the questionnaire came from all staff groups.

Group interviews revealed two very different basic management approaches. According to one of these, the ageing should be treated with respect and their knowledge transferred to the younger generation. The other common view is that ageing is negative, and it is often referred to in cynical tones. Between these two opposing views there is a third which considers the thirst for short-term profits a threat to success in the long run.

The results of the questionnaire indicated that workplaces found it difficult to cope at the same time with issues related to company reforms and ageing staff. Most of the respondents felt that there was not much content to age management at their workplaces.

There were other problems, too. More than half of the respondents considered it a problem that their workplace did not recruit older staff. About a third felt that older employees at their workplace were very likely to become embittered. More than one out of four respondents considered the demands of work at their workplace so high that the ageing would

not be able to cope. A quarter felt that older employees had to struggle to hold on to their jobs. Almost 25% thought that at their workplace the ageing are considered an expense item and encouraged to retire as soon as possible.

The respondents who reported the most problems with age management were often working under several tiers of management. These include office staff, shop floor workers, people with little formal training and the staff of large workplaces.

According to the study, general beliefs about the effect of age on learning ability are particularly worrying from the point of view of working life. Over two thirds of respondents estimated that young people are better able to cope with jobs involving new technology. About a third thought ageing persons less capable of learning new tasks than the young, and a good 25% thought that learning ability deteriorates with age.

Management and young people were more likely to have a negative image of the ageing than others. This is a particularly big challenge for age management, since leadership is in the best position to influence workplace attitudes.

Most respondents were favourably disposed towards introducing the age management approach in workplaces. The only aspect to receive a negative response was the increased hiring of

ageing workers, which was opposed by one fifth of respondents. The development of age management met with most opposition among the young and people with academic degrees.

Most of the respondents would like the labour administration to assume the role of information provider in an attempt, to promote age management. Corporate management also looked to the labour administration for information on best practices in age management. Young people and those with academic degrees were the largest groups to think that the labour administration should not take an active role in management development operations.

The study recommended several measures to be undertaken urgently. In addition, it recommended that development operations should target the entire staff of a company.

Communications

The Ministry of Labour has cooperated actively with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Ministry of Education in communication matters. In addition, the Ministry of Labour has carried out workplace development measures of its own, such as two sizeable communication campaigns aimed at the management of businesses and corporations. Information has been disseminated among employers

about the experience-based strengths of ageing workers, their learning abilities, and the principles of age management.

In 1998, issues related to the National Programme on Ageing Workers were highlighted in several press conferences, bulletins and articles by the Ministry. One of the most important messages in the working life barometer for 1998 was that age discrimination was on the increase in the workplace.

Information campaign for employers

In May 1998, the Ministry of Labour carried out an extensive information campaign aimed at employers. The campaign sought to influence the attitudes prevailing at workplaces by emphasizing the strengths involved in ageing and by distributing information to employers on how to recruit ageing employees and keep them at work. The motto of the campaign was 'Finland needs employers who appreciate experience, professional skills, commitment and maturity'.

The campaign included newspaper advertisements, direct marketing to companies, supplements on ageing distributed with *Talouselämä* magazine, TV infomercials, a special issue of *Työ-elämä* magazine and articles in *Hyvä Ikä* magazine. The campaign was prepared and carried out in cooperation with employer organizations.

According to a follow-up study, the staff responsible for personnel management in companies had noticed the campaign, and it was considered important and necessary. The basic message has penetrated the target group well. According to MTV Finland's survey, the TV infomercials got the message across effectively and were considered necessary. They received very positive feedback compared to other advertisements, whether of commercial or social content.

Age management information campaign

In 1999, the Ministry launched an information campaign on age management. The aim of the campaign was to distribute information on age management and thereby also on the objectives of the National Programme on Ageing Workers to SMEs and their consultants, educational institutions, authorities, NGOs and others. The core of the campaign comprised seminars for various target groups. In addition, *Talouselämä* published a supplement on age management, and the issue was also featured in various other publications and in *Avoimet työpaikat*, a recruitment programme on the MTV3 television channel.

In February 1999, a startup event of the Southern Ostrobothnia IT project

targeted at local entrepreneurs, the press, representatives of the business sector and cooperation partners was organized in Seinäjoki.

A press release was issued on the findings of an age discrimination study ordered by the Ministry of Labour. These and a study on age discrimination in the retail sector were also reported in *Hyvä Ikä* and *Työelämä* magazines. A follow-up study on the ageing long-term unemployed was published at a press conference in February 2000 and the subsequent press release distributed to some 250 editorial offices. A press release and several articles were also issued on the programme's follow-up report.

Ageing in working life was dealt with in meetings and other events in connection with the Finnish Presidency of the EU. A number of press releases were issued on these meetings, and also on speeches by the Minister of Labour and the Permanent Secretary dealing with the situation of ageing workers and how to improve it. The speeches attracted a great deal of media attention.

The Prime Years campaign

In autumn 2000, the Ministry ran an information and training campaign called *Hyvä Ikä* (Prime Years). The aim was to support the client services of the labour administration through information provision, to support employment and

economic development centres and employment offices in their work to improve the employment rate of the over-45s, to remind employers of the value of ageing workers, to give ageing workers themselves more confidence and to foster more positive attitudes to ageing workers in general. In addition to the staff of employment and economic development centres and employment offices, the campaign was targeted at employers, policy-makers, other stakeholders, jobseekers and employees.

Brochures were distributed with *Talouselämä* and *Seura* magazines. Information and brochures on the campaign were also distributed to employment and economic development centres and employment offices, and the campaign included a direct mailing drive. Other campaign material consisted of a set of transparencies, posters and a booklet by project manager Pertti Linkola, *Uusi ote työn ilosta* ('A new sense of job satisfaction'), which examined the issue of ageing in working life from different perspectives. Issue 3-4/2000 of *Hyvä Ikä* magazine dealt with the themes of the Ministry's campaign. Later in the autumn, *Työelämä* magazine also had a theme spread on ageing.

The campaign also sought to activate the media and stakeholders, encouraging them to take up ageing in their own reporting and magazines. Articles on the

Prime Years theme were written for business sector and labour market organization magazines. Versions of the theme were also offered to current affairs programmes on radio and TV.

Research within the campaign yielded valuable information for planning further action.

Age management and regional information campaigns

Age management was a key topic of the Ministry's information provision on the National Programme on Ageing Workers in 2001. In the autumn, two new brochures were distributed with *Talous-elämä* magazine. The target group was still the management of companies and organizations. Information highlighted the strengths of ageing workers and featured good examples of workplace communities where age-related issues had been handled well. The most recent brochure also emphasized the importance of adult education. Radio information spots also continued.

At the end of 2001 and beginning of 2002, 97,000 brochures were distributed with the *Yrittäjän maailma* ('Entrepreneur's world') publication distributed along with *Yrittäjälehti*, *PK-Talous*, and *Kauppakamari* magazines and at hotels and airports. The target group was entrepreneurs and managing directors.

The Ministry published a number of press releases in 2001, and also made several public statements on the age issue. The 2001 working life barometer was published at a press conference in mid-December and was widely noted in the media. An important aspect of the barometer was the situation of ageing workers, which was found to have improved.

During 2001, the Ministry gave strong support to regional information projects. The funds allocated were used for local and regional information provision by employment and economic development centres. Typical projects were radio commercials and newspaper adverts, seminars and training or discussion days.

Regional projects in different parts of Finland were supported by providing advice and feedback on information plans and by sending information packages to the employment and economic development centres. A CD was produced for all of Finland's regional radio stations, containing interviews with experts for use in the radio commercials acquired by the employment and economic development centres.

Other measures

The National Programme on Ageing Workers comprised promotion of flexible working time arrangements. The sharing

of work in the form of job-alternation leave or part-time supplements has offered ageing workers opportunities for study, WHP activities or simply rest and recuperation. The Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health jointly published a guide to working times in 2001, *Toimivat ja terveet työajat* ('Functional and healthy working times'). The guide gives a comprehensive overview of different working time alternatives from the point of view of workplace communities, employers and employees, both ageing and otherwise.

The purpose of anti-discrimination provisions is to ensure that jobseekers and employees are given equal treatment and to protect people from discrimination in the workplace. The Ministry commissioned an extensive survey of age discrimination in working life from the National Research Institute of Legal Policy, which also included research on the functioning of the provision in the Penal Code which prohibits discrimination.

According to a study by Anne Kouvonen on people's experiences of age discrimination at work and in recruitment situations (*Ikäsyrijintäkokemukset työssä ja työhönotossa*), unemployed people actively looking for work feel discrimination more acutely and say it is more significant than older people who

are in work. The study showed that the provisions prohibiting discrimination in recruitment situations are not very widely known on the labour market.

In order to make the provisions better known, the Ministry published a brochure on them in 2000 (*Syrjinnän sääntely ja työelämä*). The brochure gives a general overview of the main provisions on discrimination based on Finland's international commitments.

The twin aims of improving ageing people's labour market situation and ensuring them equal treatment have been taken into account in the *preparation of new legislation*. Legislative development is also linked to the preparation of Community law within the EU. The EU Directive on discrimination at work applies to age discrimination, amongst other issues. Implementation of the Directive's provisions on working life is the task of the working group on discrimination at work appointed by the Ministry on March 22, 2001. The Directive's requirements include the repealing of acts, decrees and administrative procedures in breach of the principle of equal treatment. The aim of helping ageing workers stay on at work is also included in Finland's National Action Plan for Employment in accordance with the EU's Employment Guidelines (NAP).

The role of the Ministry of Education

in the National Programme on Ageing Workers

At the Ministry of Education, the aims of the National Programme on Ageing Workers have been taken into account in all the main plans and decisions on which operations are based, in the performance targets of the Ministry and its sphere of administration, and in its information management. The programme has also been made an area of focus for adult education in the Budget.

The Ministry has promoted the National Programme on Ageing Workers through management by results and special projects. In order to boost activity on the issue, the Ministry arranged seminars and other gatherings for policymakers, experts and other stakeholders, which attracted a great deal of participants.

In implementation of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, special attention has been paid to providing information on training opportunities, improving vocational skills, ensuring the competence of teaching staff and offering all members of the public basic information and communications technology (ICT) skills. Including adult education at universities, 12-13% of the education and training expenditure of the Ministry's main title of expenditure, i.e. nearly EUR

700 million, is channelled into adult education.

The National Programme on Ageing Workers has been implemented in the Ministry of Education according to the mainstreaming principle. The following is an overview of the Ministry's main measures within the programme.

Lifelong learning

The policy of lifelong learning has played a key role in implementation of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, and its aims are included in the development plan for education and research for 1999-2004 approved by the Government on December 29, 1999. The most notable aim is to provide for the training needs of middle-aged adults, especially those with poor basic education and poor study skills.

The issues involved in improving the educational level of people with only basic education have been dealt with by the parliamentary working group on adult education, and the proposals made by the group are presented later on in this report.

One of the aims of the development plan is to make it more inviting to enter adult education by structuring studies

around individual people's own background and keeping study times reasonable, as well as drawing up personal study plans for students. In 2000, a multiannual project for making adult education more individualized (*Aikuisopiskelun henkilökohtaistaminen*, a.k.a *AiHe*) was launched with joint funding from the ESF and the Ministry of Education, with the aim of improving the quality and effectiveness of vocational skills tests by making adult education more individually tailored. By the end of 2001, the project comprised 40 educational institutions providing vocational education for adults.

Information society skills for all

The project *Information society skills for all!* is an important part of the Ministry of Education's strategy for education, training and research in the information society for 2000-2004, and it receives an allocation of about EUR 2.5 million a year from the Ministry.

In addition to practical user skills, the basic information society skills are defined as including communications skills, the ability to find and use information, consumer awareness and an awareness of and control over cause and effect. When the project began, an estimated 1.5 million Finns lacked these

skills, many of whom were middle-aged or older.

The aim is to halve the number of people without ICT skills by 2005, and in principle everyone has been offered an opportunity to acquire basic computer skills appropriate for their life situation. The basic organization in charge of implementing the development programme comprises adult education institutions, libraries, YLE (the Finnish broadcasting company), local authorities, NGOs and other partners. Actions have focused on expanding the availability of *studia generalia* and other studies provided by adult education institutes, ensuring that versatile teaching materials are available, training support and advisory staff and activating NGOs.

In 2000, the annual adult education week acted as a motivating campaign for the project. Products featured during the week included simple user guides for computers and mobile phones, the Internet service ILONET specifically designed for adults and elderly people, and the citizen's @-card (a basic computer use certificate) in cooperation with TIEKE ry.

As a follow-up campaign, a communications day for older people, 'Seniors on the web', was arranged in cooperation with the Finnish Library Association and a number of companies at over 200 libraries in Finland. An experimental and

development project was also arranged in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour, focusing on ICT skills for people over 45 in Southern Ostrobothnia. The Ministry of Education has been speeding implementation of the eLearning/eEurope programmes with about EUR 2.5 million of development funds and other appropriations within the Budget, most of this in the form of grants to the *studia generalia* sector from the National Board of Education.

The Ministry focused the study voucher experiment on basic ICT skills. The purpose of the experiment is to make it easier to acquire information society skills, especially for middle-aged and retired people, people outside working life and certain special groups. The experiment is also a way of collecting information on the feasibility of using the study voucher more extensively as a form of funding for adult education. Based on the results from the pilot stage of the experiment, the study voucher appears to be a practical way of boosting ICT training in terms of both content and volume, in keeping with middle-aged people's needs.

Skills and competence of teaching staff

The Budget allocation for education staff training in the focus areas of education policy is about EUR 12 million annually.

Important focus areas during the programme period of the National Programme on Ageing Workers have included mathematics and natural science, evaluation operations, management and on-the-job-training. A considerable part of additional training provision has focused on vocational training for adults and on developing the skills of the teaching staff in the *studia generalia* sector and advisory services.

Changes in the work of teachers, their age structure and educational level, and education policy reforms have created a need for extensive investments in the expertise of teaching staff, and national development projects have been launched at the Ministry of Education to this end. The purpose of supplementary training is to maintain and improve the formal competence of teachers, but also support and help them stay on at work and prevent burnout. Different training providers' potential for focusing resources on the expertise of teachers varies a great deal.

The Ministry of Education, the National Board of Education and the education departments of provincial State offices have been seeking to improve this situation by allocating annual funding for focus areas in education staff training. Basic teacher training, teaching practice and supplementary training have covered the training needs of teachers in terms of both content, volume, regional and language aspects. The results of evaluat-

ion and anticipation of basic and supplementary teacher training have been taken into account in developing training provision.

The Ministry has also launched tailor-made further training programmes in the area of adult education. The research, development and training programme for adult vocational education staff (TUKE-VA), the project on skills and competence for *studia generalia* staff (VSOP), and the supplementary training programme in management skills for the staff of advisory organizations (JOVA) offer 3,500-4,000 employees in the field an opportunity to improve their skills and competence. A project to anticipate the need for basic and supplementary teacher training (OPEPRO) which began in autumn 1998 has produced a comprehensive survey of teacher training.

Based on anticipation surveys and evaluation of basic and supplementary teacher training, the Ministry has drawn up a teacher training development programme, which includes qualitative and quantitative targets. A number of different solutions will be applied in expanding teacher training. In addition to increasing the number of training and student places, flexible training solutions are still needed, in order to allow people to complete any missing parts of their degrees alongside work, and also to encourage people to change from other occupations to teaching.

Information and advisory services

With support from the ESF, the Ministry has launched a development project called *Opintoluotsi*, which will create an Internet information and advisory service covering the entire Finnish education system and providing information for everyone. The aim of the service is to help people find training opportunities and the courses or programmes which suit their individual situation. The service is coordinated by the University of Helsinki. A first version of this online service will be available to the public in spring 2002. The *Opintoluotsi* service concept comprises four parts:

- 1) A search function, which helps users with active information searching and also provides links to information in other sources;
- 2) Introductory information produced especially for *Opintoluotsi*, providing background and support for choices and decisions. Links, search engines or link directories then lead users to more detailed information. Users can also ask for advice;
- 3) An inspirational and interactive section, which helps users gain new perspectives and encourages them to be active; and
- 4) Support functions which facilitate use of the service and information processing.

An information website on *Opintoluotsi* already exists at www.opintoluotsi.minedu.fi. The comprehensiveness of the service will be boosted in cooperation with educational institutions and other producers of information on education and training. A separate online service, *Oppilaitosluotsi*, has been opened for them at www.oppilaitosluotsi.net. The *Opintoluotsi* service also offers a specific support service for careers advisors and student counsellors. This service, which requires users to register, is also a forum for interaction between the public services and the expertise of the advisory and counselling field. The service can be found at www.asiantuntijaluotsi.net.

At the beginning of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, the Ministry published a study handbook on ageing (*Hyvän iän opinto-opas*) in cooperation with the National Board of Education; the handbook contains a presentation of training on offer which is especially useful for the target group of the programme, and good practices in line with the programme's aims.

Income during periods of study

The Ministry of Education took part in preparations for stage II of the training guarantee, together with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of

Labour and the main labour market organizations. New legislation on support for self-motivated study by the unemployed entered into force on January 1, 1998. This offered unemployed people the choice of a 'training allowance for the unemployed', equal in amount to the unemployment allowance, during self-motivated vocational study. The condition for granting an unemployed person this training allowance is that he must have worked for at least ten years and have been receiving daily unemployment allowance or labour market support for at least 86 days during the 12 months immediately preceding the start of training.

Legislation on the adult education allowance entered into force on January 1, 2001. The adult education allowance is a form of support for self-motivated study by employed adults, and it forms stage III of the study guarantee system. As of August 1, 2001, employed adults have been eligible for an adult education allowance in proportion to their earnings level for full-time vocational study or competence-improving studies, for a period of about 1.5 years total during their career, to be taken in one or more periods. The adult education allowance consists of an allowance and a State guarantee for a study loan. The Ministry of Education has been in charge of the definition of types of study which confer the right to this

allowance and for coordinating this new form of support with the existing system of financial aid for students.

Maintaining physical fitness

The second 5-year period of the *Kunnossa kaiken ikää* ('Fitness for life') programme which is jointly funded by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health continues during 2000-2004. The programme focuses primarily on people over 40, and in second programme period there is an additional focus on the elderly, in line with the Government programme. The main aim of the programme is to encourage people to take up exercise or sport even if they have never done this before, and it has been quite successful in achieving this aim.

A pilot project on activating people to exercise for their health was launched in 2001. Nearly 2.3 million working age Finns suffer from impaired functional capacity. The target group of the programme consists of adults who do not get enough exercise to maintain their health and fitness, and who may therefore be at risk of deteriorating work ability and functional capacity. The aim is to encourage people to exercise for their health and to support the formation of local service chains for healthy exercise, including local adult education centres

and similar institutions. Participants in the project included the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, Keski-Suomen Liikunta ry, the Finnish Recreational Sports Association and the Association of Adult Education Centres.

Research

The Ministry of Education has commissioned studies on adult education and taken part in national and international studies on the state of adult education.

The most notable of these was the OECD Thematic Review on Adult Learning, according to which Finland has the highest adult education participation rate among the working-age population in the OECD countries. According to this international comparison, adult Finns are active students and Finland has adopted a learning culture.

The comprehensive network of educational institutions catering to adult learners and the widespread use of computers and virtual learning environments provide Finns with a solid foundation for lifelong learning. The Finnish adult education system is unique in terms of its 'double nature'. On the one hand, there are training programmes designed specifically for adults and special adult education institutions. On the other hand, training in general is age-neutral, so both

young people and adults can take part in the same courses.

Adult education is fairly individual in its nature. The adult education system provides individual study paths for adult learners. There are special training programmes designed for adults and they can have personal study programmes drawn up for them.

Adult learners also have a choice of flexible studies which are not tied to specific times or places. The skills test system and the teacher training and recruitment systems are successful practices which could be used as models for other countries, too. The skills test system has successfully combined recognition of informal learning with a skills level required for formal and generally accepted qualifications. It is also a key factor in the flexibility of the adult education system. Teachers, meanwhile, are often working in the field that they teach in, which means they are abreast of the latest information on actual working practices in the field.

The assessment is supplemented by an Adult Literacy Survey of 20 countries which was completed in 2000 (OECD/ SIALS), according to which Finnish people are, on the whole, among the most active readers by international comparison, even if there are Finns who suffer from severe deficiencies in functional literacy. Poor reading skills

make it difficult to take part in adult education and prevent active civic participation in the information society.

The Ministry of Education funded a follow-up analysis at the educational research centre *Koulutustutkimuskeskus*, which focused particularly on the potential and problems of people over 40 in adult education. The Ministry also launched a study on a related subject at the department of sociology at the University of Joensuu in 2001, analyzing the adult education potential of people with low basic education.

The Adult education 2000 study by Statistics Finland shows that 1.8 million adult learners took part in adult education, with more women than men taking part. Most of the training in question was work-related.

The National Board of Education's assessment of the vocational qualification system was completed in 2001. The Ministry of Education has also taken part in the preparation and funding of the Academy of Finland's research programme on ageing.

The main challenge for adult education is still how to encourage people with poor basic training, ageing people and those at risk of exclusion to take part in adult education. Although Finnish people are more active than people in the other OECD countries in taking part in adult education, the training has a tendency to

‘accumulate’ more in certain groups than in the other Nordic countries. For instance, unemployed people and blue-collar workers study less as adults than other groups.

The studies mentioned above further emphasize the need for measures to expand educational provision for those with the poorest basic education or who are otherwise in a vulnerable position, and to tailor provision more to their needs. The report of the Parliamentary adult education and training committee (OPM 3:2002) contains more detailed proposals for measures in the spheres of the education and labour administrations.

The Parliamentary adult education and training committee

In spring 2001, the Ministry of Education appointed a Parliamentary adult education and training committee, which was given the assignment of making an extensive study on the present state and resources of adult education and training and making proposals on how it can be further developed. The committee included representatives of the political parties, the education and labour administrations, the Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, the labour market organizations and the main training providers. At the time of writing,

the report of the committee is being circulated for comments.

In its study, the committee paid particular attention to changes in occupational structures and the position of ageing people in working life. Wellbeing at work and motivation are crucial factors in ageing employees’ decisions on whether to stay on at work or take some form of retirement. In its report, the committee finds that improving the skills of ageing workers will also improve their job satisfaction as they gain more interesting and secure jobs.

One of the main proposals is that a five-year competence boosting programme should be started for people of working age with poor basic training. People without secondary education would be offered an opportunity to improve their skills to the level of a secondary vocational qualification. Between 8,000-12,000 annual student places would be booked for this in 2003-2007. Part of the resources of the project would be channelled into improving information society skills, for instance basic qualifications in computer use.

Working life is changing, not just in terms of occupational structures, but also in terms of the actual content of almost all occupations. The rapid pace of change causes skills to go out of date faster than before, and additional or supplementary training is therefore essential. The

Parliamentary adult education and training committee proposes that adults should be given the opportunity to update their skills through a short development period every year, and to take part in more extensive training every 10-15 years.

The committee also feels that studies in the *studia generalia* sector are important as a way of ensuring active civic participation for ageing people. The committee proposes giving more resources to this sector and providing support for its position as a form of education open to all citizens. The *studia generalia* sector and other general education provision for adults also holds an important position in improving the study skills and motivation of people with little basic education.

wellbeing at work in the State sector, 1996-2000

In the State sector, wellbeing at work is a first priority both in human terms and from the perspective of economics. The staff in the sector is ageing, work is changing, and personnel numbers have fallen, resulting in increased stress and pressure of time. In maintaining the work ability of the staff and preventing uncontrolled early retirement, measures have been needed to reduce the psychological stress of the work and give everyone the opportunity to exert an influence. In the capacity of insurance institution for the State sector, the Treasury is well aware of the changing challenges of working life.

Cooperation with the government departments that constitute the Treasury's client base is based on long traditions, confidential and focused on the workplace. The real pioneers are to be found in the fields of occupational safety, early rehabilitation and occupational health care. In 1996, a training project aimed at improving government employees' wellbeing at work and help them stay on at work (TYKY, i.e. WHP) was launched in this environment as part of the national *Huomisen työkyky* ('Work ability tomorrow') project.

Aims

The aims for WHP (workplace health promotion) activities were defined together with the State Advisory Board on Pensions as follows:¹

- the organizations should understand the importance of WHP activities and self-motivated activities in ensuring wellbeing at work;
- the organizations should be committed to WHP activities;
- the workplace communities should understand the effects of WHP activities on workplace development and the productivity of the workplace community;
- cooperation in the workplace should improve;
- government employees should become better able to stay on at work, thus ensuring the continued service capacity of the State administration.

The project ended at the end of 2000. By then, over 200 information and discussion meetings had been arranged for top and middle management in government departments and offices, explaining the importance of WHP activities and self-motivated activities for wellbeing at work, the quality of working

¹ Kaiku service guide. Valtiokonttori (Treasury) 2001

life and the productivity of the workplace community. Training programmes were also drawn up in cooperation, as a way of ensuring the organizations' commitment to WHP activities and to ensure the service capacity of the State administration.

The training reached over 90 per cent of workplaces. Training for the departments' WHP groups was carried out at a total of 80 seminars, whose participants consisted of 420 groups and nearly 1,700 people from all administrative sectors. Training was in two parts, A two-day seminar dealt with the concept of work ability, WHP activities, motivation and rehabilitation, and the strengths of ageing workers.

A feedback seminar was held about two months after the end of training, when the groups drew up a WHP plan for their own workplace. This contained the measures needed in each group's workplace to activate the entire staff for WHP activities and the maintenance of work ability. An annual seminar was also held on the theme "Work ability is valuable".

These seminars were intended for managers, members of WHP groups and occupational safety organizations, and rehabilitation contact persons. The themes were chosen carefully and speakers were leading experts in the field. About 200 people took part in each seminar dealing with future issues.

Experts at the Treasury have continued to arrange regular meetings with managers in the different administrative fields during 2001. These meetings have ensured a strong commitment to WHP among top management. This is also supported by a 1998 impact study carried out by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, which showed that, even then, there was more WHP activity in government workplaces and more resources had been channelled into it than in the local authorities and the private sector.

Discussions have proved that the commitment of middle management plays a crucial role in putting WHP activities into practice. If a manager shows that he considers WHP important, this will be reflected in the workplace community. Special focus areas in WHP training have been the close connection between quality and personnel wellbeing, an emphasis on community, and work ability developments as people age.

The fundamental idea behind all of this, however, is the strong link between work ability and work itself. This has emerged more and more in post-training operating plans alongside the traditional approaches of encouraging exercise and healthy lifestyles. Further support for this idea has come from research on the effectiveness of early rehabilitation, which shows that a well-functioning workplace community improves work

ability and health and motivates people to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Many State sector workplace communities are working on quality improvement. They may not always realize, however, that quality and personnel wellbeing are closely interrelated. In order to fulfil increasingly demanding performance targets, departments must ensure the wellbeing of their staff.

In the future, the best way of maintaining work ability will be to develop work and administration, management and workplace communities, employees' personal wellbeing and their own responsibility for it. This will require development of work processes. By 2010, half of the State sector's staff will have changed. In relation to this, issues such as age management, ageing and learning, experience and mentoring have emerged. Ageing people are able to learn new things, they are innovative and they feel appreciated if they are encouraged to pass on their experiences to the next generation. Particular support should be given to a career development which rewards and appreciates increasing occupational expertise and enables work rotation.

WHP is part of the personnel strategy

The WHP centre at the Institute of Occupational Health evaluated the effectiveness of the State sector WHP

training project. The results, published in June 1999, indicated that WHP activities had been most successful in the organizations which had allowed reform of forms of cooperation which supported wellbeing at work and mental wellbeing. This had resulted in new operating models and workplace practices. A broad definition of work ability and a related operating model and a general positive attitude had been generally adopted by the organizations which took part in training.

WHP activities had usually been incorporated into personnel policy and personnel strategy. WHP groups usually consisted of representatives of personnel, occupational safety and management, but representatives of occupational health care, personnel administration and rehabilitation were also often included. The success of WHP activities depended on all the parties involved in cooperation, but the commitment of top management was crucial. In addition to ensuring the commitment of top management, it is a challenge to ensure sincere commitment and participation from middle management — and the entire staff. It was promising to note that management had taken an active part in the planning and organization of WHP activities.

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health awarded the first Team Finlandia prize to a team at the Treasury in August 2000. The reasons for giving the prize to

this specific team included the ability of the team members to combine their separate areas of expertise into a functioning whole.

Changing indicators

The changes taking place in the operating methods of workplace communities and the attitudes of individual workers are also shown by the following indicators. In 2000, the average retirement age among employees covered by the State pension system was 58 years and 4 months. The average retirement age had thus gone up by 9 months since 1996.

It is particularly worth noting that the percentage of all employees who work until the statutory retirement age has gone up. In 1996, 49% of employees retired at the statutory retirement age, while in 2000 this figure had risen to 59%. One contri-

buting factor to this improvement was that there were fewer cases of disability pension. In 2000, the average age for retiring on a permanent, full disability pension was 54 years 1 month, i.e. older than four years previously.

In 1996, the average age for retiring on a disability pension had been 52 years and 4 months. Age-adjusted commencement of disability fell from 9.3% to 6.8% during the same period, when people taking early retirement are included. These improvements have been achieved through the efforts of the government offices and agencies themselves, and have been influenced by a number of factors ranging from individual people's attitudes to legislative changes. The Treasury will continue to support workplace communities and employees in ensuring wellbeing at work.

Work together for work ability project

The *Työkyky tehdään yhdessä* project ('Work together for work ability') is aimed at WHP activities in small workplaces and began in 1999. Its interventions will end in 2002.

The main aim of the project is to create new models, particularly for improving the work ability of ageing workers in small workplaces, and to evaluate the effectiveness and functionality of these models.

A second aim is to raise awareness of how work ability can be improved in small workplaces, to identify good practices and disseminate them and to draw up instructions for improving work ability in the workplace. Many small companies are finding it a great challenge to maintain work ability and cope with the pressures of a changing age structure. Small companies are still the hardest to reach for both occupational safety authorities, occupational health care and WHP activities. The aim here is to make WHP activities a natural and systematic operating model for companies.

A third aim of the project is to evaluate the quality of WHP activities and small companies' ability to implement them. This is a project competition, where the best innovations will be awarded prizes at

the end of the project. Companies are competing amongst themselves over who can find new ideas and alternative solutions, especially in development activities focusing on ageing workers.

Target companies

20 SMEs from southern Finland were selected for inclusion in the project. The project received over 200 applications, 150 of which fulfilled the conditions for a small workplace. Participating companies were required to be prepared to develop the work ability of their entire staff so that the focus of development would be both work and the worker. Both management and staff were expected to be committed to completing the project.

The project includes companies involved in plant and equipment manufacture, transport and building, motor vehicle sales and repairs, real estate maintenance, paper processing, electrical maintenance and printing. Other sectors represented are training, consultation and research, occupational health care and social services, communications, culture and sports and recreation.

12 of the companies in the project are in the province of Southern Finland, with

five of these being located in the Helsinki area. Eight of the companies are in the province of Western Finland. In terms of size, one of the companies is a micro-company (2-9 people), 11 are small companies (10-49 people) and eight are medium-sized companies (50-249 people).

Project operating model

The effectiveness of the project will be studied by comparing measurements from the beginning and the end of the project, focusing on changes in work ability and the functioning of the workplace community, the content of projects and the general implementation of operations as a whole.

A survey of work ability and the functioning of the workplace community in the companies involved was carried out in 1999-2001. The survey, which focused on work ability, job descriptions and personnel wellbeing, was divided into sections on specific themes which have a key influence both on the health and wellbeing of employees and the functioning of the organization as a whole. The results of this initial survey gave the companies an impression of the work ability and wellbeing of their employees, vocational development needs, the challenges of the work, management performance, general

atmosphere and the employees' attitudes to retirement.

1,301 people out of 1,727 in 20 companies responded to the initial survey, yielding a response rate of 75%. 59% of respondents were men, and 41% women. The average age of all respondents was 43, while the average for men was 44 years and the average for women was 42. 47% of respondents were aged over 45, and this classified as ageing. 89% of respondents had permanent employment relationships, while 8% were fixed-term. Respondents had worked for an average of 11 years for their present employers. 45% of respondents reported that their work was mental, 39% both mental and physical, and 16% physical.

Measured with the WHP index, the respondents' work ability was good on average (index value 37-43), and there were no work ability differences between the men and women. There was a steady deterioration of work ability as people got older. The effects of ageing were particularly clear in physically demanding jobs. The deterioration of work ability was clearest in heavy and physically demanding work such as the building sector, transport sector and repair services.

Most commonly, people suffered from musculo-skeletal diseases. 26% of respondents had at least one such ailment or disability diagnosed by a doctor.

Disabilities resulting from accidents were the second most common, with as many as 16% having one or more such injury. Both sexes had a high rate of musculo-skeletal disorders, although the specific conditions varied according to occupation. The highest rate of musculo-skeletal disorders and accident-related injuries was found among manual labourers, and illnesses and injuries began to interfere more and more with work as people got older.

85% of respondents believed they would still be able to work two years later. 13% doubted this would be the case, while 2% said they would be unlikely to be working two years later. These work ability predictions varied according to age group and sector, with people in physically demanding jobs being more likely than others to doubt their future work ability.

19% of respondents had experienced stress. The people whose work ability was rated excellent or good experienced little stress, while those in the reasonable to poor category were far more likely to report feeling stressed. 64% of respondents were happy with their jobs. A correlation can be noted between the WHP index and people's job satisfaction, in that people whose work ability was rated excellent or good were far more likely to be happy with their jobs than people in the reasonable to poor

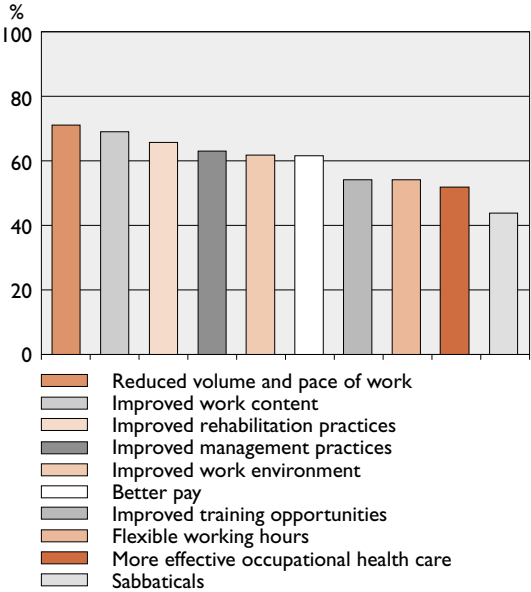


Figure 18. Most important factors influencing wellbeing at work

categories.

The most topical issues in relation to the working environment included working time arrangements, working positions and ergonomics adjustments, work procedure arrangements, lack of space, help for heavy lifting, improved temperature control and ventilation and solutions to damp and mould-related problems.

When asked about their attitudes to retirement, around half the respondents said they had considered retiring before the official retirement age. 11% said they thought constantly about retiring, while 34% said they had not given the subject any thought. A study of the connection

between attitudes to retirement and work ability classification revealed that people whose work ability was rated excellent or good seldom if ever think about retirement, while as many as half of those with reasonable to poor work ability think constantly about retirement.

The most important factors influencing wellbeing at work and helping people work until old-age pension were reduced volume and pace of work (according to 70% of respondents), improved work content (67%), improved rehabilitation practices (64%) and improved management practices (62%).

61% of respondents said an improved work environment was important, 61% suggested better pay, 56% suggested improved training opportunities, 56% said flexible working hours, 53% mentioned more effective occupational health care, and 44% sabbaticals. People over 45 generally considered a reduced volume and pace of work to be the most important factor, 33—44-year-olds considered it to be improved work content (75%), while people under 35% rated better pay highest (75%). The main factor in improving wellbeing at work for people performing mental work was improved work content (70%), while 71% of manual labourers felt the most important factors were a reduced volume and pace of work and improved rehabilitation practices.

Launching development

Based on the initial survey, recommendations were given to the participating companies about their primary development targets. The companies then drew up development plans before starting with actual measures. The aim was for the development plans to be varied and comprehensive and to seek to simultaneously improve the health and functional capacity of individuals, vocational skills, the workplace community and working conditions. A broad view was emphasized from the outset.

The idea was to support companies in making their development work systematic and continuous. Practical operations and information provision were often set in motion at a special ‘project launch’ event. The companies themselves were responsible for implementation of WHP measures with help from either outside consultants or project staff.

The concept of WHP activities was clarified through general discussion at meetings organized within the companies. Attention was specifically paid to different interpretations and definitions of the WHP concept. The aim was for each workplace to form a clear idea of work ability and be able to evaluate how it was put into practice in the everyday routines of the workplace.

The aims of the companies involved ranged from introducing quality management systems and developing customer service concepts to maintaining physical fitness. Areas of focus included mental and physical wellbeing, improvement of management skills and systems, and improvement of vocational skills. All the areas chosen were linked to maintenance of work ability.

An effort has been made to expand the perspective from the wellbeing of individual workers to factors influencing workplace communities and work content, and also the functionality of different working methods. Practical action has progressed in different ways in different companies, depending on their size and the time spent on WHP activity.

Operations within the companies have been promoted through interviews, cooperation seminars, consultation and provision of expert assistance. The aim was to support companies in finding a unanimous approach to WHP actions within the company or sector. Interviews were used to study and clarify views on work ability and work-related problems. Commitment and participation by the entire workplace community has been supported by organizing various events.

Development has already begun in all the companies except four. The intensity of operations was different in the different companies. The companies where

progress has been quickest had a separate WHP group or founded one for the project, and this group has been in charge of dealing with WHP issues and encouraging progress within the company. The groups received support and help from consultants at an early stage, and will continue to do so whenever needed.

Some companies have had problems with commitment to WHP activities. After the initial rush of enthusiasm, there has been no-one to lead activities and no time to spare. Management plays a crucial role in promoting activities and putting changes into practice. Giving employees more influence and providing information about the process of change have proved important in ensuring that everyone is committed. Improved corporate image and publicity have motivated the management to support development in many cases. Changes in the business climate have sometimes made it difficult to spare energy and personnel resources for long-term work.

Most of the operations involved improved vocational competence and skills, support for mental wellbeing, mentoring, changes in work content and re-organization of work. Mentoring involved older, more experienced colleagues giving support and guidance to younger employees.

Additional vocational education was

arranged in most companies, with five arranging training for supervisory and management staff, and skills surveys and development interviews have also been introduced. The ergonomics of the work environment has been improved in half of the companies involved. Five companies have started training for supervisors. Most companies have dealt at some stage with how to improve and maintain physical fitness, usually in the form of group exercise or sports or various fitness tests.

Observations and results of WHP activity

The intensity and quality of development have varied a great deal from one company to the next. The size of a company, its previous experience of this type of activity and the resources available have all had an impact on the process. The sector of a company also had some bearing on the focus of its WHP activities.

Various external factors, such as economic uncertainty, the competitive climate and changes and alterations in personnel resources had at least a short-term impact on operations. Some of the companies did not form a WHP group at all, which left the management to cope with WHP activities in addition to its normal workload.

The induction time required at the

various companies varied according to sector. Despite a positive attitude, some companies needed a fairly long time to discuss matters and mull them over. Companies' ideas about what WHP is also varied a great deal. In some companies, WHP activities were a clearly yet broadly defined tool for developing the entire work organization, while others saw it primarily as a tool for maintaining physical fitness.

Some of the companies did not have the resources to start practical operations at all, and so are still at the planning stage. Other companies got off to a good start and continue to show great initiative. These were usually the companies where a special WHP group was in charge of operations, and they also usually had experience of similar operations and a strong commitment to it from both management and staff. It was not always a successful solution to delegate responsibility to an existing body within the company such as the occupational safety committee.

Many of the companies involved began re-thinking either their operations or their operating concept, using the systematic data collected on personnel work ability and wellbeing. The data from the initial survey on issues such as the personnel's level of work ability, the functioning of the workplace community and vocational skills has also been used

in planning development actions in other operating sectors of individual companies (e.g. training programmes, measurements of workplace atmosphere, etc.) Interventions in the workplace atmosphere and ergonomics have been made as needed.

Awareness of the extent of the concept of WHP has increased, as is evident in work to maintain vocational skills through training, investments in the functioning of the workplace community and a general willingness to develop the skills of supervisory and management staff.

Conclusions

Companies need a lot of support in launching and implementing WHP activities. The breadth of the WHP concept itself is often hard to grasp, and

turning it into practical action demands long-term systematic effort and careful planning.

The outcome of the project will be evaluated at the end of 2002. It is hoped that the project will have helped companies define their development targets more closely, enabled them to monitor operations consistently and evaluate its results, helped in the financial planning of development actions and generally raised awareness of the breadth of WHP activities. The survey at the start of the programme will be repeated at the end, and the process will then be assessed. The important question to answer will be what kind of development actions produce results and what kinds of WHP models can produce positive changes for the good of the entire workplace community?

A tool for participatory planning of workplace health promotion

For a decade now, Fundia Wire Oy, a manufacturer of long steel products and a subsidiary of the Rautaruukki Group has engaged in a cooperation project with the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health for the promotion of employees' wellbeing and improvement of their work capacity and overall productivity. Within the framework of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, Fundia Wire Oy has produced 'Metal Age', a tool for maintaining the work capacity of ageing workers and improving working conditions.

Although its original target group were ageing workers in the metal industry, Metal Age can be applied to workplace health promotion related to employees of all ages in all industries. In fact, it has already been successfully used not only in the steel industry but in hospitals, schools and amongst cleaners, and the response has been positive. Metal Age has also been picked up by Metallgruppen, the Swedish organization of metal industry employers, which has incorporated it into its training programme.

Cooperation increases commitment

There is already a sufficient amount of

research data on the ageing of the labour force and its effects to provide a basis for interventions related to workplace health promotion. When such interventions are planned for a workplace, the following points should be taken into account:

- How can we ensure that employees become interested in the project and even enthusiastic about it?
- How can we ensure that all employees will participate?
- How can we provide the right measures and solutions for the workplace?
- How should the solutions provided be prioritized?
- How should practical measures be implemented?
- How can we manage or eliminate any resistance to change among employees?

Metal Age provides answers to these questions and helps to implement tailor-made measures at the level of both the entire organization and specific departments or teams.

The Metal Age tool kit consists of a four-page introduction to the Metal Age system containing three worksheets, and a set of seven overhead transparencies for presentation by the head of the planning team.

Planning usually takes place in groups

of 5-20 people; some of the work is done in pairs. The planning process, which usually takes 8-10 hours, results in a set of practical measures specifically designed for the workplace and addressing the following topics: occupational skills, the workplace community, work, and the individual.

Each measure is assigned a manager and carried out according to a set schedule. All teams will meet a few months later to assess the success of the measures and decide on any further action to be taken.

One of the main advantages of Metal Age is that cooperation in the planning process increases employees' commitment to the development process, where they are an important resource. Measures proposed by employees with regard to workplace health promotion are often both simple and inexpensive.

Management of the age distribution

of staff at UPM-Kymmene Corporation

After its formation in 1996, UPM-Kymmene Corporation examined the age distribution of its staff and did forecasts on the number of new employees required in the future and development of the staff's age distribution by 2005. The report showed that the average age of employees at the company's Finnish sites was over 43 years, with those aged 46-50 forming the largest age group. The average age of retirement was less than 57 years, a very early age even against national statistics. This indicated that if the retirement age remained the same as the generation of baby-boomers approached retirement age, there would be a shortage of skilled labour by the year 2005 at the latest.

The Corporation established a working group consisting of five staff representatives, three representatives from occupational health care and two from human resources management. Their task was to formulate an action programme for raising the average retirement age in the company and curbing the overall rise in the average age of employees. The idea was to ensure that the company would have a skilled and capable workforce who would also stay on at work in the first decade of the 21st century as the baby-

boomers approach retirement age. This would require maintenance and improvement of the skills, physical capacity and work motivation of ageing employees.

Main content of the programme

The action programme was divided into the following areas:

1. Maintenance of the work input of ageing workers

Measures related to workplace health promotion had already been employed at workplaces within the Group for a long time. The Group's action programme was now modernized and a total of 400 key employees were trained in workplace health promotion in cooperation with the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and the Ilmarinen Mutual Pension Insurance Institution. Site-specific instructions for workplace health promotion were amended or replaced with new ones. According to new rules set by the Group, 25 years' service would be rewarded with two weeks' extra holiday and 35 years' service with four weeks' extra holiday.

2. Development of working methods, work content and the working environment

Working methods, work content and the working environment will be developed in accordance with employees' individual needs and particularly with regard to ageing. The Group will attempt to curb early retirement by offering all employees of the appropriate age the option of part-time pension, provided their work can be arranged accordingly.

3. Development of professional skills

Training provided to ageing workers will focus on new technology (particularly information technology) and language skills.

4. Personnel planning and recruitment

The decrease in labour will be compensated for by hiring trained young people in advance to replace retiring workers.

Change of focus from ageing to wellbeing

The action programme for workplace health promotion used to be reviewed annually, but many began to feel that the programme focused too heavily on ageing workers. Today the action programme promotes the overall wellbeing of the entire staff in a more even-handed manner.

The main points of the programme for helping employees stay on at work are as follows:

1. Improving job satisfaction and the atmosphere at work

- Each employee can and should participate in the planning and development of their own work and working environment.
- The atmosphere at work will be surveyed and proposed measures carried out at Group and unit levels.
- Matters related to maintaining employees' wellbeing at work and their health and work capacity are discussed in their annual performance reviews.

2. Employees' personal responsibility and actions for maintaining their own health and work capacity

- All over-30s are called for a medical checkup every five years and informed on healthy lifestyles; for the over-50s, the checkups will be every 2 or 3 years.
- Checkups are accompanied by personal plans for independent physical exercise and health promotion.
- At the checkups and various training sessions, employees will be informed of the effects of ageing.

3. Creating a balanced age distribution among the staff

- The average age of retiring employees will be raised from the current 58 years to

60 by the beginning of 2005.

- Part-time jobs and part-time disability pensions will be introduced wherever possible or necessary.
- Performance reviews for employees over 50 will include a personal plan regarding their future years at work.
- Performance reviews will include an assessment of the need for further induction and occupational training, particularly in the use of new technology.
- Ageing employees' ability to cope at work will be supported by supervisors and colleagues.
- New employees will be recruited in advance of staff needs.
- Recruitment of new employees will focus on younger people who are about to complete or have just completed their studies.
- The philosophy of mentoring, as in the system of masters and apprentices, will be applied in the workplace.

4. Keeping absenteeism under control

- All sites must have an up-to-date programme on wellbeing at work and a plan for workplace health promotion.
- The aim is to ensure that employees will not suffer from industrial diseases or injuries when they retire.

Outlook for the future

All 55-year-olds at each mill were invited to courses aimed at ageing workers. The

course *Ikä lisääntyy – mutta niin tekee viisauskin* ('Age brings wisdom') was deemed very informative but the target group was already too old for the course. The company is now launching a revised course called *Kokemuksesta voimavaroja* ('Strength from experience'), which focuses on 45-year-olds. Younger workers may also join the course as this will help to bring the views of several generations into unit-specific development programmes.

There will be another extensive training programme for new key employees in cooperation with the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health and a pension insurance institution.

An important project in the field of training and research is the establishment of an occupational health institute in Valkeakoski on March 1, 2002, as part of the University of Tampere's Business Research Centre. UPM-Kymmene is making a very generous contribution towards the chair of a professor and head of the institute to promote research on ageing in an industrial environment in particular.

Results

For the past twenty-five years, the forest industry has implemented lay-offs for production or financial reasons as one way of downsizing personnel, where a person living on unemployment benefit received on a basis of a lay-off may

eventually apply for unemployment pension. In recent years, UPM-Kymmene has tried, though not fully successfully, not to introduce any further lay-offs; employees, however, see lay-offs leading to unemployment pension as quite a humane way of downsizing. Because of company acquisitions and rationalization processes, the number of UPM-Kymmene employees in Finland has dropped from about 24,000 to less than 21,000 since 1996.

After some hesitation in the late 1990s, taking part-time pension as an alternative to retiring from work altogether is now gaining popularity at UPM-Kymmene. Today, a total of 471 employees from different units and business sectors are on

part-time pension. The company has also employed new systems of applying part-time work to shift work.

Because many people are still eager to opt for early retirement, raising the average retirement age to 60 years has turned out to be a fairly slow process. Nevertheless, the age of retirement has already risen by two years from 56.6 years to 58.5 in 1997—2001. There has been a clear change in the attitude of employees towards staying on longer at work. We therefore believe that the retirement age of 60 years will be a reality by 2005 and that we will then be able to set new goals. The impact of the National Programme on Ageing Workers

WHP barometer surveys on workplace

health promotion at Finnish workplaces in 1998 and 2001

Barometer surveys are primarily used to measure ongoing changes and produce an overall picture, indicating both recent and anticipated trends in the topics discussed. A good barometer is sensitive enough to capture and reflect any change in circumstances. Political decision-makers are interested in the information produced by barometers as it helps them examine the impact of political measures or explain their reasons for planned actions. In recent years, the media, too, have been increasingly interested in barometer-produced information.

Background and objective

A joint project of the National Programme on Ageing Workers and the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health (FIOH), the Workplace Health Promotion (WHP) barometer was first used at the start of the National Programme on Ageing Workers in 1998 and repeated towards the end of the programme in 2001. A report on the results from the WHP barometer, with relevant tables, will be published in spring 2002.

Above all, the WHP barometer is a tool for monitoring the implementation, functionality and contents of workplace health promotion. It reflects actions taken

on workplace health promotion and produces information on the input placed into these actions and on the various forms of actions.

The WHP barometer can be used to examine the following issues:

- the extent of workplace health promotion measures in Finland;
- the variety of workplace health promotion activity;
- the resources used for workplace health promotion;
- the types of incentives used for workplace health promotion in the workplace
- the main obstacles to workplace health promotion;
- the expected impact of workplace health promotion; and
- the views on workplace health promotion measures held by the main actors in the workplace — the employer, the employees and occupational health care.

The WHP barometer survey does not see workplace health promotion as a novel activity detached from normal workplace routines, but as an integral part of human resources policy and development in the workplace. At its best, workplace health promotion is a holistic approach adopted by the various actors that has become an integral part of

everyday routines in the workplace.

Workplace health promotion should affect all staff in the workplace. The idea is to encourage cooperation with external experts and services in those areas of workplace health promotion that the workplace would not otherwise have the resources for. Fluidity of cooperation within the workplace and with outside experts is a key factor for successful workplace health promotion.

The WHP barometer was developed on the basis of the broad concept and definition of workplace health promotion formulated in November 1992 by the Advisory Board of Occupational Health set up by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. According to this definition, workplace health promotion refers to all activity carried out in cooperation between the employer, the employees and cooperating organizations to promote and support the health and work ability of all workers at each stage of their careers.

In the survey, the target areas of the barometer were defined as the basis of a specific tetrahedric model where the target areas of the activities were divided into work and the working environment (ergonomics, work hygiene and occupational safety), the workplace community and work organization (management, operating procedures and interaction), employees' health and resources, and their occupational skills and expertise.

Research material and methods

The target unit used in the WHP barometer interviews is the workplace, where analysis and interest focuses on workplace health promotion and the way it is arranged, implemented and focused on the personnel. For purposes of the survey, an organization's operations carried out in several units or departments located on a specific lot are considered as a single workplace.

The population of workplaces in the survey included all those with a staff of at least two people of whom at least one is an employee. The sample was taken from the register of companies and places of business maintained by Statistics Finland and from the register of public corporations.

The samples used in the barometer constitute a random stratified sample. The criteria for the strata were the employer sector (local government, the State, the private sector), the size of the personnel (a minimum personnel of two, at least one of whom is an employee and the location of the workplace (the province of Southern Finland, the province of Western Finland, the rest of the country). The workplaces were divided into groups based on the size of their personnel 2-4, 5-9, 10-19, 20-49, 50-99 or 100+ people).

The first survey, which was carried out

in 1998, covered 805 workplaces and included interviews with a total of 2,232 people. 805 of the interviewees represented employers (response rate 81), 735 represented employees (response rate 92) and 692 worked in occupational health care (response rate 89). The second survey was conducted in 2002 at 876 workplaces with a total of 2,427 employees. 876 of the interviewees represented employers (response rate 88), 814 represented employees (response rate 98) and 744 worked in occupational health care (response rate 92).

The WHP barometer has two special characteristics. Firstly, it charts respondents' views on and experiences of workplace health promotion in their own workplace communities. Secondly, it can be used to make forecasts on the basis of information on plans regarding the workplace in the near future from decision-makers and other key persons (cf. business cycle barometers in the industrial sector).

Three persons were to be interviewed at each workplace: a representative of the management, a representative of the staff (e.g. industrial safety delegate, member of the industrial safety committee, shop steward) and a representative of the occupational health care services provided for the workplace (occupational health care nurse). This sample of interviewees representing the three main

groups of people at workplaces allowed easier comparison between workplaces: it was important to establish how the workplace health promotion activities were perceived by the employer, the employees and the occupational health care staff.

All interviewees had to be in a role or position in their workplace community where they were fully familiar with the workplace health promotion measures carried out there.

In the 1998 employer survey under the WHP barometer, 53 per cent of those interviewed belonged to the top management level and 47 per cent were line managers. In the 2001 survey, 51 per cent belonged to the top management level and 49 per cent were line managers. In the employee survey conducted in 1998, 59 per cent were industrial safety delegates or in corresponding roles (2001: 47%), 14 per cent were shop stewards (2001: 20%) and 27 per cent were other representatives of staff (2001: 33%). With regard to occupational health care in the 1998 survey, 92 per cent of interviewees were occupational health care nurses (2001: 38%) and 8 per cent were other health care professionals (2001: 7%).

The WHP barometer survey was conducted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health. The research data for the survey was collected by a unit specializing in computer-aided telephone

interviewing (CATI) at the Institute's Research and Development Centre for Occupational Health Services in autumn 1998 and 2001. Before work began on the actual interviews for the barometer, the Institute carried out a pilot survey to make sure that the questions were easy to understand, the questionnaires properly structured and the population used in the interview as broad as possible.

The barometer's analysis was based on cross-tabulation. The sample was very good and the research material showed no bias that might affect the results. The results can be applied to all people working in Finnish workplaces with a staff of at least two, at least one of whom is an employee.

The state of workplace health promotion in Finnish workplaces

The results from the WHP barometer indicate that workplace health promotion measures reach most of the Finnish working population: in one form or another, these measures have been provided at more than 90 per cent of workplaces with a staff of at least two people, and the percentage is still rising.

In the past 12 months, workplace health promotion has increased at the workplaces of at least one third of all employees interviewed, and more

resources are to be allocated to workplace health promotion in the next 12 months at workplaces which cover one third of all workers.

However, there clearly remains a good deal to be done to increase integration of workplace health promotion into the everyday routines of workplaces. At the workplaces of more than half of all workers covered by the survey, workplace health promotion is not sufficiently included in everyday operations. This aspect remained unchanged between 1998 and 2001.

Workplace health promotion is considered to have a wide range of favourable effects on workplaces. There is a considerable amount of confidence in the financial benefit derived from workplace health promotion: according to the survey, more than 90 per cent believed that workplace health promotion activities brought considerable or at least some financial benefit to the workplace. This view remained the same between 1998 and 2001. The cost-effectiveness of workplace health promotion measures was also recognized: in 2001, the management at 90 per cent of the workplaces found that the cost-effect ratio of the measures was good (1998: 85%).

The range of development activities implemented at workplaces has been very wide, with measures focused on a number of fields: the work itself and the working

environment (particularly industrial safety and the functionality of tools and working areas), the workplace community and the work organization (particularly work design and quality, cooperation and participation, clarification of the goals of the work, communication, and management and leadership), professional skills (particularly improvement of skills through training) and supporting employees' health and resources (particularly the provision of opportunities for physical exercise). There was no change in these aspects between 1998 and 2001.

Occupational health care plays an important role in workplace health promotion. Over 70 per cent of interviewees felt that occupational health care contributed very significantly or fairly significantly to workplace health promotion at their own workplaces. Occupational health care professionals are remarkably active in the evaluation and planning of workplace health promotion. These results did not change between 1998 and 2001.

Ageing is not a problem

In light of the results of the WHP barometer, the ageing of the workforce is not perceived as a significant problem in the workplace. However, it definitely is considered a significant problem in the workplaces of about one in ten local government or private sector employees.

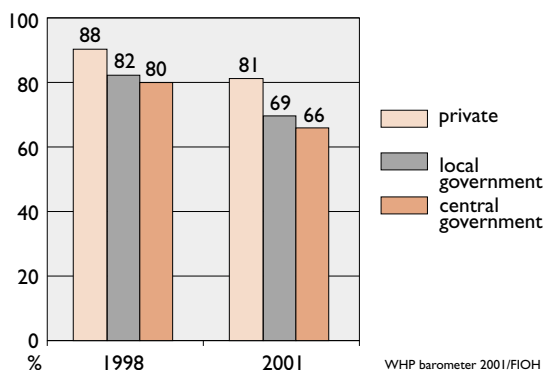


Figure 19. Workplaces without personnel trained in age management (management interview)

In 1998, about one fifth (21%) of employees in the State sector were in workplaces where their employers felt, unlike employees in other sectors, that the ageing of the workforce was clearly a problem; in 2001, the figure was 16 per cent. In the private sector, more employees considered ageing no problem at all than employees in the public sector.

At private sector workplaces with a staff of less than 10 people, the ageing of the workforce was more commonly considered by employers as no problem than at workplaces of at least 50 employees, but this difference has become smaller. Ageing was naturally seen by the employers as a less serious problem in workplaces where ageing workers (45 years or older) accounted for least half of the staff; however, this view declined from 66% to 47% between 1998 and 2001.

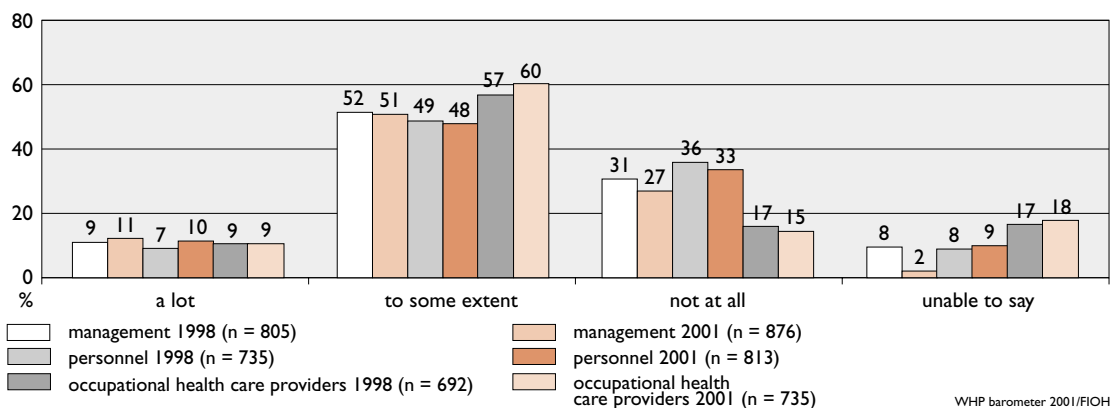


Figure 20. How much does the workplace help ageing workers stay on at work?

In the opinion of representatives of employers and employees, ageing workers are not encouraged to stay on at work at all in about one third of all workplaces; promotion of staying on at work is very active in less than one in ten workplaces (figure 20). In State sector workplaces, employers believe that efforts to encourage ageing workers to stay on at work have slightly increased; employees, however, take an opposite view.

In the private sector, employees find that staying on at work has gained more support. In the local government sector, this view has not changed between 1998 and 2001, and neither have the views of the employers and employees. Representatives of occupational health care feel that workplaces where ageing workers are not encouraged at all to stay on at work are fewer than perceived by employers and employees.

The size of a workplace correlates with

the intensity of encouraging ageing workers to stay on at work. In the case of workplaces with less than 10 people, not encouraging ageing workers at all to stay on at work is more common than in workplaces of at least 100 people (figure 21). In 1998, a higher percentage of workplaces with less than half the staff under 45 did not encourage ageing workers to stay on at work than workplaces with at least half of the staff over 45.

This difference did not appear in the

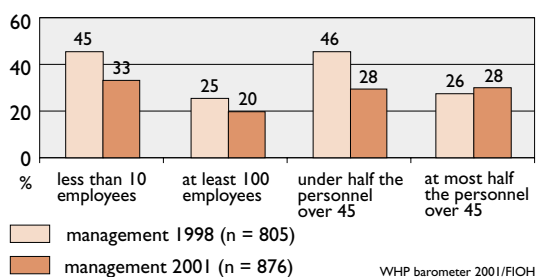


Figure 21. The workplace does nothing to help ageing workers stay on at work

data gathered in 2001. At local government workplaces which had already gone through major changes in production, working methods and work arrangements, staying on at work was promoted to a lesser degree than in workplaces where such changes still lay ahead. In 2001, ageing workers' staying on at work was more actively promoted in workplaces where changes, though prepared for, had not yet taken place than in workplaces that were going or had gone through the changes or were not expecting any changes.

Age management, or taking the needs and strengths of ageing workers into consideration, was a fairly rare phenomenon in workplaces in 1998: in more than 80 per cent of workplaces (local government 82%, State section 80%, private sector 88%), the management level had not been given any training in age management. By 2001, age management was becoming more common, particularly in the public sector (no age management: local government 69%, State sector 66%, private sector 81%) (figure 19).

Maintenance of physical fitness: the most popular measure in workplace health promotion for ageing workers

In response to an unstructured question about improving the health and work ability of the over-45s (figures 22a and

22b)s, the most frequently proposed measure was support for the maintenance of their physical fitness (1998: 44-51%; 2001: 33%). Other fairly frequent measures concerned support for employees' mental health, rehabilitation (both vocational and medical), redefinition of job descriptions and flexible opportunities for re-employment, working hour rearrangements (short time, part-time work, part-time pension for 56-64-year-olds, transfer from night shift to day shift) and promotion of other healthy life styles. Other measures and approaches suggested were provision of encouragement and motivation of personnel to take charge of their own health and work ability, provision of vocational on-the-job training, changes in working methods (ergonomic improvements), support for coping at work and staying on at work, personal career and development plans, support for lifelong learning, health checks and medical checkups, age management, and changing attitudes towards ageing.

With regard to supporting the work ability of the over-55s, more than 60 per cent proposed the same measures as for the over-45s, with only a few per cent mentioning specific measures, and even these were the same as those suggested for the over-45s.

The 1998 barometer invited comments on the following claim: 'Old employees

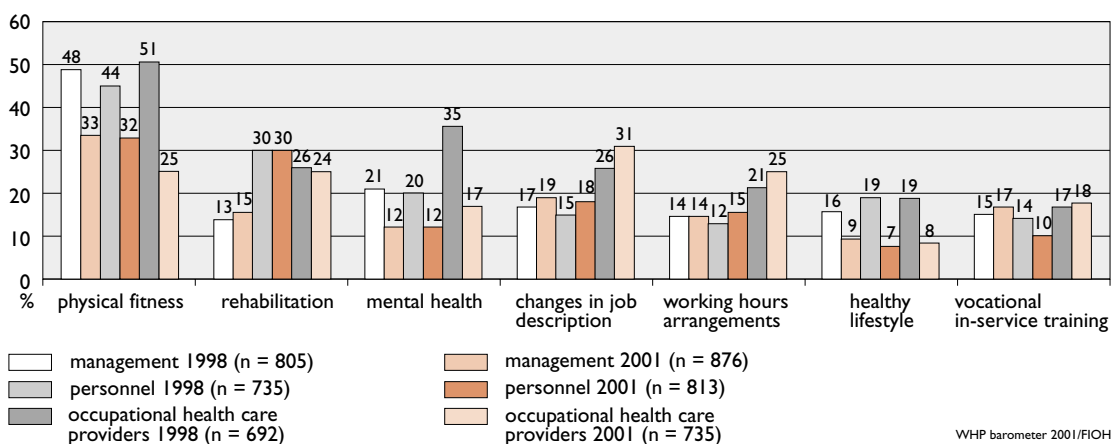


Figure 22a. Proposed focus of actions to maintain the work ability of ageing workers

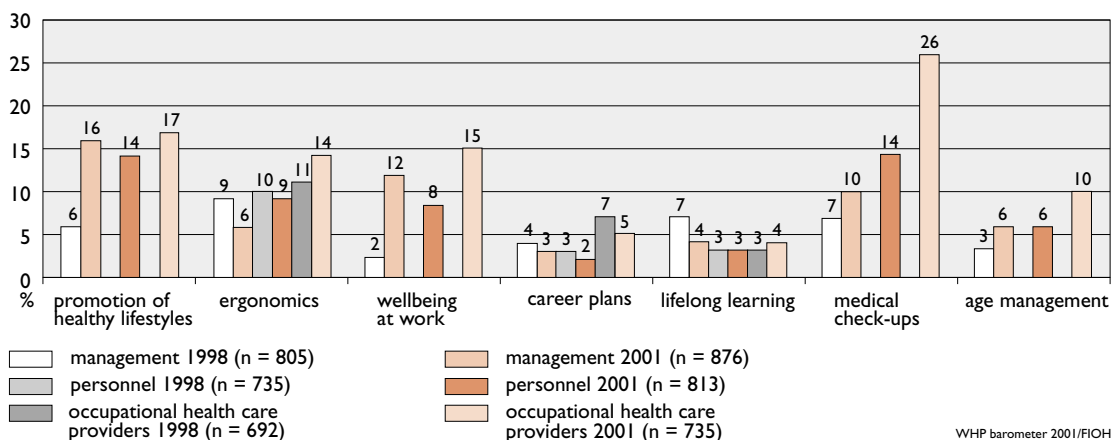


Figure 22b. Proposed focus of actions to maintain the work ability of ageing workers

should retire so that there would be enough jobs for younger people.’ 27-42% of the interviewees agreed fully or to some extent with this claim.

Age discrimination was not a commonly perceived phenomenon at private sector or State sector workplaces. In 1998, age discrimination either to some extent or to a very large extent was

perceived in the workplaces of 2—7% of employees in the private sector and the State sector, and in the workplaces of 9—17% of local government employees; in 2001, the percentages were 1—5 per cent and 1—3 per cent respectively. In 1998, age discrimination within local government was, according to employers and occupational health care

professionals, more common than in the private or State sectors. By 2001, these differences between employer sectors had evened out.

In 1998, the views of the interviewees on equal treatment of employees of all ages were closer to each other than the views presented in other sectors (totally equal treatment for workers of different ages: employers 55%, employees 50%, occupational health care 34%). However, in private sector and State sector workplaces, the views of employers and those of employees and occupational health care professionals differed more clearly (totally equal treatment for workers of different ages: 61% vs 16-38%). In 2001, the views of employers and employees in all employer sectors differed (totally equal treatment for workers of different ages: private employers 64% vs employees 44%, local government employers 60% vs employees 45%, and State sector employers 62% vs 32%). The views of occupational health care professionals were closer to those of the employees than the employers (totally equal treatment for workers of different ages: private sector 34%, local government 31%, State sector 21%).

According to the survey, there was some age discrimination against both young and old employees. A maximum of 39 per cent (1998) and 32 per cent (2001)

considered that there was discrimination against both groups. In the private sector, employers and employees were more convinced than representatives of occupational health care that there was age discrimination against young people. In State sector workplaces, the views of occupational health care professionals on discrimination against young people were different from the experiences of employers and employees. One reason for this may be that occupational health care professionals perhaps see older workers more often than they see young workers and are thus more aware of older workers' problems and any discrimination against them.

In the data gathered on both years (1998 and 2001), there is a marked difference in the attitudes of public sector employers and employees towards age discrimination against older workers. In the private sector, however, both groups of interviewees have the same view.

In 1998, at private sector workplaces where less than half of the employees were ageing workers, any age discrimination was perceived more commonly to be directed against young people than at workplaces with more than half of the staff ageing workers (35% vs 4%). The 2001 data show that workplaces where less than half of the employees were ageing workers displayed less age discrimination against older workers than

workplaces with more than half of the staff ageing workers (9% vs 20%). It is possible that the group forming a majority in a workplace feel they meet with less discrimination than those in the minority.

Conclusion

People in Finnish workplaces are paying increasing attention to matters that call for development or improvement and are accordingly taking steps to advance these issues.

For a large number of workers, workplace health promotion is now carried out on a wide front and with a variety of measures. Nevertheless, workplace health promotion at small workplaces in particular requires further development and support, as does integration of workplace health promotion into daily work routines and operations and workplace development.

With the ever rising standards for working life, there is surely no reason to question the need for workplace health promotion measures. These will help individual workers and organizations caught in the flow of major changes to adjust to the demands of the evolving labour market and the constantly changing operating environment. Workplace health promotion is a continuous process, which will in the future be more and more necessary for

organizations.

Workplace health promotion is widely regarded as an important way of maintaining and advancing employees' work ability and considered to bring significant benefits to the employer, employees and occupational health care. Age management has become slightly more common in public sector workplaces. On the general level of all Finnish workplaces, age discrimination is not a serious problem.

A worrying trend, however, is that employers and employees clearly disagree on whether employees are unequally treated. Employees are more convinced of unequal treatment than employers, particularly in the public sector, where age discrimination against ageing workers is more apparent to employees than to employers.

The ageing of the workforce presents a clear challenge to the national economy and one which will become more and more acute in the near future when the post-war baby-boomers reach the age for early retirement. Maintaining and promoting people's work ability and willingness to work and improving their occupational skills should be an important step in the social policy of the new millennium. Workplace health promotion is one way of helping workplaces to encourage their ageing employees to stay on at work.

Workplace health promotion which is designed specifically for ageing workers and based on their needs and which takes into account any needs for development of work organization and improvement of occupational skills will help ageing workers stay on at work and increase their resources for a good 'third age'. Whether a person enjoys his retirement has been shown to be connected to whether he is content with the last years of his working career. Good work ability and an effective input into workplace health promotion will benefit people in their 'third age', allowing them to lead an active and meaningful life in retirement.

A very large percentage of currently working people are confident that they would find a new job requiring the same skills should they have to start looking for one for some reason. This confidence in finding a new job has increased throughout the 1990s and, except in the case of the under-25s, in 2001 as well.

The most confident are the 25—34-year-olds: more than 90 per cent believe they could find a new job. However, the response from the youngest age group was almost equal.

Ageing workers are clearly less optimistic about finding a new job.

Nevertheless, the confidence of the over-45s in finding a job requiring the same skills has clearly increased more than that of younger age groups: six out of ten 45—54-year-olds believe they could find a new job. This rise is strongest in the oldest age group despite the fact that only one in ten believed in their ability to find a new job in the early 1990s. Although this percentage is now four times higher, finding a new job is still hard for a large percentage of ageing workers.

Ageing workers' confidence in finding a new job has increased among both men and women, with women being slightly

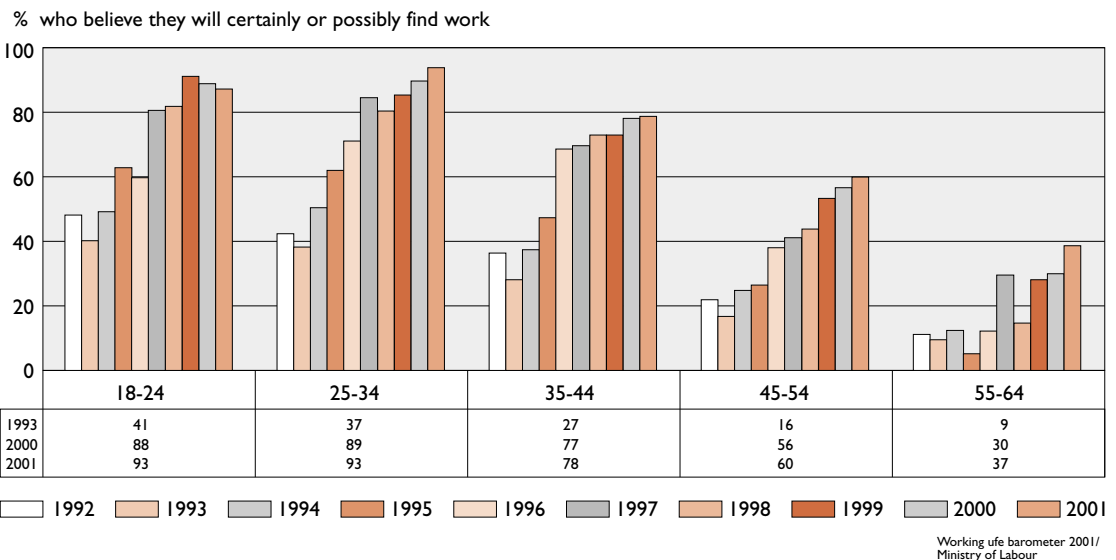


Figure 23. If you were to become unemployed, do you believe you would find work corresponding to your present professional skills?

more pessimistic than men throughout the 1990s. During the worst years of the recession, ageing women who did believe in finding work were extremely rare. In 2001, a little less than one third of ageing women and nearly one half of ageing men believed they could find a new job. In other words, at least ageing workers themselves believe that their position on the labour market has become stronger.

In 1999, the European Commission launched a Peer Review Programme related to implementation of the European employment strategy. The purpose of the programme is to promote mutual learning and recognition and exchange of good practices. Each Member State hosting a peer review meeting presents a national programme representing a good practice. The meeting is attended by representatives of authorities of Member States interested in the programme, independent commentators and a representative of the European Commission.

Finland's National Programme on Ageing Workers was evaluated at the Helsinki peer review meeting in October 2001 attended by delegates from the Netherlands, Belgium, Spain, Austria, France, Sweden, Germany and the United Kingdom.

The course and results of the programme were presented by officials of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education; also, representatives of the social partners presented their own views and actions. The Finnish Institute of Occupational Health presented the *Porkkana* ('Carrot') project and the WHP barometer survey, which had both been

conducted under the programme. In addition, the participants at the meeting visited the headquarters of UPM-Kymmene Corporation for a presentation of the company's strategy regarding ageing workers.

Keen interest in the Finnish results and experiences

Although the situation is different in each Member State, the ageing of the population and the problems related to the employment of ageing workers are challenges which they can meet easier by learning from each other's experiences. In Finland, these problems have emerged on a large scale sooner than in most of the other countries.

The delegates from the countries involved in the peer review found the results and experiences gained from Finland's National Programme on Ageing Workers quite interesting from the point of view of their own countries as well. While other countries have implemented various measures and isolated individual programmes with goals similar to those of the Finnish programme, few have launched national programmes of equal scale and coverage.

In general, the delegates took a keen interest in the diversity of the approach applied in the Finnish programme to a number of measures (preventive actions, for instance), to the goal of influencing prevailing attitudes on a wide front and to the cooperation between the partners involved in the programme (including three ministries). The broad consensus among the Finnish social actors on the importance of encouraging ageing workers to stay on longer at work and the strong involvement of occupational health care services in development activities were considered definite strengths by the peer review meeting.

The positive role of the programme

The paper submitted by an independent commentator for discussion at the peer review meeting recognized that the programme clearly targeted questions that related to helping ageing workers to stay on at work longer than they do today — a goal which from the Finnish point of view has strong justification. In terms of focusing on such issues, the programme was seen as comprehensive and clearly defined.

Many key indicators — the employment rate, the average age of retirement, engagement in workplace health promotion measures — show a

change in the direction of programme goals. The preliminary impact of the programme appeared to be favourable, although it proved impossible to distinguish the ‘direct’ effect of the programme from other factors producing similar effects. In any case, the programme has played a positive role in raising issues related to the ageing of the labour force.

The overall opinion of the meeting was that the programme was very sound, it had achieved a great deal of good, it had innovative potential and it was based on a solid foundation for the future.

The opinion of Finnish experts included an examination of the programme against a broader background, or from the viewpoint of ‘cultural shift’ or ‘paradigm shift’. Quite clearly, this programme was simply a gateway to circumstances encompassing slow change in the operating and management cultures of work organizations and in people’s lifestyles. It is therefore important to maintain and reinforce the main themes and implementation mechanisms of the programme.

There is still ample room for improving cooperation between the various institutions and in the development activity and dissemination mechanisms at operative level. There are also grounds for extending the essence of

the programme to people's entire life spans — particularly as they move from one phase of their life to another — and to interaction between civic society and working society. The positive message of the programme and the positive, flexible measures to encourage ageing workers to stay on at work should also be strengthened.

The impact of the National Programme

on Ageing Workers

In the context of the National Programme on Ageing Workers, economic resources are a broad concept which covers material, human and social capital. Here, human capital is closely related to occupational know-how.

The approach applied in the programme stresses the importance of on-the-job learning. Although occupational skills and knowledge acquired through formal training form a foundation for the skills required in the actual work, they become obsolete unless they are not further developed at work. Social capital, which refers to the relations between people and organizations, has a positive impact on acquiring these skills, both at individual and at corporate level. Economic growth is also influenced by the policy adopted and the functionality of the institutions involved.

The National Programme on Ageing Workers focuses on providing a better understanding of the relationship between the various capitals and the related technological process. One of the aims of the programme is to remove obstacles to market success where such obstacles may be due to a slowness of renewal among employees and in the entire organization. Sometimes organizations and their

employees simply do not invest enough in their own renewal. Achieved through policy interventions, even the smallest increase in the time spent for renewal of the necessary skills required for the work can have a significant impact on economic growth and social welfare. A skilled and experienced staff is crucial for the success of a business. This was an important reason for launching the National Programme on Ageing Workers.

The National Programme on Ageing Workers had two focal areas: work ability and the employability. In this context, work ability is defined as development of human capital to meet the needs of working life. The employability was clearly linked to system-level issues such as legislation and support and service systems. Social capital refers to ways of supporting the development of work ability through legislation, agreements and intra-organizational arrangements. The National Programme on Ageing Workers targeted people's individual ability and willingness to stay at work as well as companies' ability and willingness to keep their staff employed. In order for the programme to succeed, employers and employees must be able to rely on each other.

The main objective of the National Programme on Ageing Workers was to provide for growth in human capital in working life and to strengthen the trust between employers and employees to a degree where (a) employees' work ability will continue to meet the requirements of working life and (b) employers are prepared to extend their employees' contracts to the age of retirement.

The success of the programme can be measured by its success in improving intra- and inter-organizational activities for each of the above objectives.

The four sectors of a balanced success

Promotion of work ability

Physical and mental health are essential components of work ability. Because work and health are mutually interdependent, work, too, can affect a person's health and ability to cope. Adequate training and skills for the job are also vital. The National Programme on Ageing Workers included a variety of measures related to employees' health, their coping at work and improvement of their skills.

According to the WHP barometer survey, workplace health promotion has become more common and the National Programme on Ageing Workers has had a positive impact on working life, particularly in the management of organizations, training provided for

employees and employees' means to influence management. However, the growing uncertainty in the labour market also manifests itself in an increase in problems of coping.

Employment: the opportunity to work

In times of structural change, the requirements placed on employees' skills usually become tighter and/or change as new occupations emerge and old ones disappear. One of the cornerstones of the programme was promotion of ageing workers' on-the-job learning. On average, ageing workers have received less formal training and education than younger people. On-the-job learning helps to bridge the gap in basic training between employees. Learning new things will also boost productivity and work motivation. Opportunities for on-the-job learning allow ageing workers to keep up with technological innovations and to compete better on the labour market with those who have just completed their studies.

According to the report of the Peer Review, the volume of adult education for ageing workers has increased during the programme and the needs of ageing workers have been taken more carefully into account in the planning of training. There is now a network of trainers in age management whose work can benefit from the results of and experiences from the programme.

Employability

The structural change in the Finnish economy in the 1990s increased and tightened the demands placed on labour, which brought particularly heavy pressure on older workers. Because the employment rate was low, the supply and demand for labour were in balance, with the 'supply curve' leaning backwards. If the supply curve is to be restored to a higher level, a very wide range of actions is necessary: actions focusing on individuals, such as tailor-made employment services, rehabilitation for improvement of health, vocational training, etc. But even this is not enough. We also need changes in legislation to provide better incentives to work and thus boost people's work motivation; such changes could include raising people's pension accrual rate as their careers move to a close.

Under the programme, changes have been designed and implemented in legislation and pensions systems to encourage people to stay on at work. Occupational safety and health care have also been improved through legislation. Under the programme, the employment rate among ageing workers has become better than average and ageing workers' confidence in finding new work has increased faster than that of younger generations. The National Programme on Ageing Workers has at least in some way contributed to this trend.

The programme also included an extensive information campaign aimed at changing public attitudes, company attitudes and recruitment policies and the attitudes of ageing workers themselves. To put it bluntly, attitudes returned to the traditional work ethic from the paths they had strayed onto in the 1970s and 1980s.

Enhancing and promoting social capital entails creating a climate of confidence in the workplace. Employees must be able to trust that their skills will be appreciated and required in the future as well and that employers consider their skills worth investing in. Employers must be able to count on employees' willingness to develop themselves and continue working. The National Programme on Ageing Workers stressed the importance of social capital as a factor promoting wellbeing at work and contributing to economic growth. In practice, this meant paying attention to well-functioning management at the organizational level and trying to find confidence-promoting solutions in cooperation between employers and employees in the workplace.

Societal effectiveness

When the National Programme on Ageing Workers was launched, it soon became apparent that even the basic research data was insufficient. There was no clear overview of the health and occupational skills of ageing workers nor profiles of

the unemployed or the long-term unemployed. There was no overall view of coping at work or of the various pathways to early retirement. Nor was there a clear picture of the learning capacity of these groups or of how new ideas should be taught to these groups. There was a lack of knowledge on the strengths and weaknesses of ageing workers, their current situation or their potential skills and requirements.

Because research data relating to different fields is gathered from the specific starting-points and aspects of the science or discipline involved, the problem was to convert such data into a form that could serve the needs of administration more concretely. Under the National Programme on Ageing Workers, this goal was sought by engaging several research and development institutes from various fields of administration.

Research and development relating to the programme and dissemination of the knowledge acquired have increased public awareness of the ageing of the workforce and of the strengths and weaknesses of ageing workers. It has also made decision-makers, opinion leaders and the management of companies and other organizations see the challenges and necessary changes related to the ageing of the labour force.

How to sustain the legacy of the National Programme on Ageing Workers

The National Programme on Ageing Workers represented a very novel approach to socioeconomic problems, seeking to coordinate and combine into a functional whole actions serving the same target groups within different sectors.

The aim was to avoid any overlapping or conflicts between actions taken by the various administrative sectors. From the customer's point of view, this approach, as long as it is successful, means the availability of a cohesive range of services, whether social services or education, and an opportunity to alternate between these services. The programme mainly operates through the existing system and the actors therein.

The National Programme on Ageing Workers employed a multidisciplinary style: because workers in different sectors have different vocational backgrounds and different approaches to their jobs, coordinated cooperation between sectors forces people to learn new ways of thinking and see things from new angles. Adjusting one's personal approach is an obvious challenge for people engaged in practical work and it has proved relatively successful.

The basic principles of the programme proved sound, although there is still

plenty of room for clearer definitions and changes in focus.

The National Programme on Ageing Workers has succeeded very well in creating cooperation between:

- various ministries, particularly the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education;
- ministries and labour market organizations;
- ministries and related government offices and agencies;
- ministries, related government agencies and businesses.

The main focus of further work on the programme is to enhance such cooperation by directing more and more research and development onto a more practical level. The approach employed by the programme should be integrated in the everyday routines of all organizations, from microenterprises to large corporations.

The results of the research and development carried out under the programme need to be converted into practical instructions to be used at corporate management level as the basis for finding the best ways to maintain employees' work ability. Good practices brought to light through research and development must be turned into reality in working life. This will require closer cooperation between enterprises and

occupational safety and health care professionals.

In essence, the National Programme on Ageing Workers is the principle of lifelong learning put into practice. It must contribute to ensuring continuity of occupational skills in the future. It is important to be able to benefit from experiences gained from learning models and teaching methods that can be applied to ageing workers. The programme has built an extensive network of market-oriented trainers, whose services seem to have got off to a good start. Steps should be taken to ensure that trainers have a supply of up-to-date material to work on.

To make lifelong learning even more intensive, on-the-job training and formal training should be further integrated. Although learning the ropes of a job takes place outside formal training, we should remember that the goals of training and education are not limited to working life, and any skills acquired through training will be enhanced through work experience.

Different age groups and generations are never identical in terms of health, education or career. Living and working conditions change, as do each one of us. Setting the first year of ageing at 45 years is largely based on research into workers' health, showing that this is the age where – unless the appropriate steps are taken – people's physical fitness clearly begins to

deteriorate. Therefore, the issue of an ageing labour force must be extended to cover workers of all ages, since exclusion from the labour market is not a question of age; the roots of the problems date back to earlier years.

The economic and social aspects of society complement each other and should be developed even-handedly. In addition to good practices and functional structures, we must have norms and rules to provide for social cohesion and to prevent exclusion from the labour market. It is also appropriate to promote the social and political responsibility of enterprises for utilizing the skills and expertise of ageing workers.

Mainstreaming of equal opportunities will be integrated into further actions under the programme. Equal opportunities should also be made an integral part of normal routines in the workplace. Further actions under the programme should be more strongly directed to various categories of ageing disabled people, as ageing tends to be exacerbate work-related problems arising from disabilities. So far, the programme has progressed as if it worked equally well for all workers; in the future, it will be important to differentiate the various actions.

When the National Programme on Ageing Workers was launched, Finland was suffering from very high

unemployment. Today, the main problem is to ensure availability of labour. It may be necessary to refocus actions clearly serving the programme towards younger age groups than before. Another option is to develop the normal service system applied to each and all from the viewpoint of ageing. Securing the availability of labour also calls for an alert, critical eye on the current routes of exit from the labour market. A lot of attention will be paid to factors affecting the supply of labour.

The VETO Programme

The Ministry of Social Affairs and Health is preparing a programme called VETO for increasing the attractiveness of working life and improving the health and fitness of the working-age population. The goal of the programme is to ensure that people can fully participate in working life, encourage them to stay on longer at work and enhance the attractiveness of work.

The programme will be launched in 2002 and pursued in its full extent until 2006. The four parts of the programme have the following themes: (1) attitudes to safety, (2) occupational health care and rehabilitation, (3) diversity and equality at work, and (4) income security and time in work.

The programme will aim to ensure the

availability of sufficient labour in Finland in the near future by focusing on wellbeing at work, work ability, and health and safety, thus also ensuring a balanced and effective work performance, extended employment and the attractiveness of work over any of the other options available.

To achieve these goals, we need to develop the working environment and the workplace community, increase the options open to individual employees for coping at work, develop pension systems, intensify activities related to occupational health care and safety, promote equal opportunities and develop training and education activities.

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The **Many Faces of the National Programme on Ageing Workers**, the **Concluding Report on the Programme**, is the product of many people's efforts and many different measures. It contains descriptions of measures and results from a number of sources. During its five-year programme period, Finland's **National Programme on Ageing Workers** stimulated widespread discussion of age-related issues, improved training opportunities for ageing people, helped adapt management styles and work organization in companies and lobbied for legislative amendments in support of ageing workers' labour market standing.

The basic outline of the programme proved to be very functional, but further measures will always be needed to improve the wellbeing at work of ageing workers. In the light of experiences during the programme, it is proposed that responses to the challenge of ageing should be adapted to changing circumstances. The **VETO** programme, designed to make work more attractive, is a step in this direction.

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